

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



50 707 518

Gen. Sil.

The University of Chicago
Libraries



GIFT OF

Disciples' Divinity House

22

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"This is emphatically a book for the times. * * * There is remarkable power of condensation, united with clearness in the exhibition of the arguments on behalf of the Divine authority, authenticity, and genuineness of the Holy Scriptures, while the claims of the Gospel are winningly set forth in the lectures, illustrative of its adaptation to all men, and its results on 'social economics' and on the true elevation of the people. * * * If this book meet the general circulation which its intrinsic merits deserve, it will, we are persuaded, under the Divine blessing, prove an important auxiliary in the hopeful movements now being made for the true happiness and progress of the people."—*Christian Times*, May 15, 1852.

"These lectures have done much good to those for whom they were at first designed, and we cordially wish that the benefit may be extended to thousands more."—*Eclectic Review* for July 1852.

"The lectures are in number fifteen; and anything better suited to the class addressed, more likely to recommend itself to the practical interests as well as moral intelligence of working people, or in every respect more free from cant or pretence, than the tone and method adopted throughout, we could not have imagined. They were well worthy of republication."—*London Examiner*, April 17, 1852.

"This is a valuable production, presenting an excellent example of the most efficient method of dealing with the many. * * * In truth, the volume is altogether one adapted to general circulation, deserving alike the attention of the workman and the workman's master. It abounds with many facts, which, while sustaining positions and illustrating principles, are in themselves fraught with interest and instruction. The two last lectures, entitled 'Objections,' are very masterly. The work has our cordial commendation, as beautifully blending intelligence with piety."—*British Banner*, April 28, 1852.

"Mr Wallace takes up and disposes of all those objections to revelation which ignorance and prejudice so often urge against it, appealing alike to the reason and the feelings with an eloquent warm-heartedness which cannot fail to produce a deep impression on the mind of every reader. * * * This valuable little volume is dedicated to the working men of Bradford; it ought to have been, and in fact it really is, dedicated to working men everywhere, and not to those only, but to every class of the people. It is just such a book as the character of the times demands."—*Scottish Press*, April 23, 1852.

"Here we have a volume full of genuine and unaffected promptings for the moral and religious welfare of the people. Rarely or ever has an eloquence, marked with simplicity, earnestness, and grace, been enlisted in the same cause for such purposes, and with such immediate success, a certain and undeniable proof of its intrinsic worth and value. The volume consists of some fifteen lectures (delivered before audiences of 2000 persons), at the Mechanics' Institute of Bradford. In two days a thousand volumes were sold. * * * The volume deserves a world-wide circulation, and we do not doubt but that it will meet with a welcome everywhere."—*Weekly Dispatch*, May 2, 1852.

"Besides embracing much historical and literary matter, they are suffused with the radiance of a glowing fancy, and contain many

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

passages of the finest eloquence. While the author's principal aim has been to clear away doubts and vindicate the claims of the Bible to be regarded as the best friend of the million, he has, at the same time, produced a book that will be read with much interest and profit by thousands who have no doubt on the subject. Masters who feel an interest in the welfare of their workers, could not do better than present every young man or woman in their employ with a copy of this work."—*Glasgow Examiner*, April 24, 1852.

"The author was successful in drawing the attention of the working men of Bradford to the subject, and their example will probably influence the workmen of other parts of Yorkshire and of the empire to take an additional interest in the Bible. The lectures throughout fervently recommend that book to working men as the one in which they may find the true guide of life and the balm for every woe."—*Economist*, May 15, 1852.

"We would especially direct attention to the lecture on the 'Social Influence of the Bible,' and the one entitled the 'Bible and Social Economics.' They will, we are persuaded, commend themselves to the mind and heart of every intelligent working man."—*Leeds Times*, May 8, 1852.

"These lectures are eminently qualified to remove many prejudices, and beget a much kindlier feeling towards the Christian faith in that large body of the working people to whom they are especially addressed."—*Weekly Times*, May 23, 1852.

"We have seldom met with a volume more suited, in its plain, straightforward, honest, and able advocacy of the Bible, to recommend the blessed volume to the confidence and affection of men."—*Scottish Congregational Magazine*, June 1852.

"Mr Wallace has succeeded in thoroughly unmasking the kind of infidelity that obtains among the working classes, in a style of diction at once earnest and popular. We wish the lectures could be circulated through every city, town, and village of Britain. It is a pity that such a work should not be gratuitously distributed among working men by those who have the means at command, and the Christian willingness to employ them in a good cause."—*Primitive Church Magazine*, July, 1852.

"This is, in our eyes, a very interesting and a very valuable little volume; it is one of the first attempts we have seen to explain in popular, and even in eloquent language, the great questions connected with the Bible as a book, its authenticity, its inspiration, and its use. We earnestly recommend it not only to the class for whom, as the title informs us, it is especially designed, but to every other class of our readers."—*London Weekly Paper*, May 1, 1852.

"Mr Wallace wishes to bring living religion into the heart and home of the poor man; and we believe he here smites into the heart of the matter. * * * We call the following a remarkably good piece of writing." (See p. 135.)—*Hogg's Instructor*, June 5, 1852.

"These lectures were delivered on the Sunday afternoons, attracted large audiences, and were distinguished by considerable success—facts which we are not at all surprised to learn on recurring to the contents of the volume before us. We can cordially recommend its perusal to all ranks; and the more it is circulated among the class for whom it was intended, the better for them."—*Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, June 1852.

THE BIBLE

AND

WORKING PEOPLE.

MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

THE BIBLE

AND

WORKING PEOPLE.

BY

ALEXANDER WALLACE, D.D.,
GLASGOW.

Given by Disciples' Divinity House

FIFTEENTH THOUSAND.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

GLASGOW: DAVID ROBERTSON.

TO
ISRAELI OFF

BS540

W2

PREFACE.

THE circumstances which led to the delivery and publication of the following Lectures may be stated in few words. The Bradford Town Mission was instituted in January 1850. I had for a long time previous to this, in common doubtless with many others, felt deeply convinced that, in order to reach a large number of the working-classes who attended no place of worship, and who seemed indifferent, if not altogether opposed, to all existing embodiments of Christianity, it was necessary to institute a special service expressly for them, to be less formal and stereotyped than the usual routine of the public religious services on Sabbath, and to be conducted in some room wholly unconnected with any place of worship. Such a service, I felt convinced, would furnish an excellent opportunity for ministers of the Gospel and others to manifest some degree of sympathy in the spiritual and social condition of a large body of the working-classes, and by plain, familiar, and affectionate dealing, to remove many prejudices, and beget a much kindlier feeling towards the Christian faith.

My views as to the necessity for such a movement were fully confirmed by statements bearing upon the same subject made by the venerable Dr Godwin at a public meeting held in Bradford, March 1849. I re-

solved to try the experiment, and proposed to the Directors of the Town Mission to give a series of Lectures on the Bible on the afternoon of each Sabbath till the course would be completed.

The necessary arrangements were made, and the Lectures commenced. The object contemplated by the delivery of these Lectures, and the success of the experiment, are fully shown in the extracts from the "Bradford Observer" and the Reports of the Bradford Town Mission.¹

As to the publication of these Lectures, I need only remark, that I have felt in duty bound to publish them, such as they are, having been formally requested to do so in the month of October last, first, at a large Public Meeting held in the Exchange Rooms, Bradford, Rev. Dr Acworth, President of Horton College, in the chair; and, again, at a densely crowded meeting of the working-classes, held in the Temperance Hall, over which Alderman Brown presided.

I cannot but return my best thanks to the following gentlemen:—Robert Milligan, Esq., M.P. for Bradford; Samuel Smith, Mayor of Bradford; Titus Salt, J.P.; Henry Forbes, J.P.; Alderman Rogers; Alderman Brown; John Rawson, Esq.; and John Priestman, Esq.;—who have kindly subscribed such an amount towards defraying the expense of publication as will place at least ONE THOUSAND copies within the reach of the working-classes of Bradford at a merely nominal price.

It affords me much pleasure gratefully to acknowledge the valuable services of Mr William Logan, the able and devoted superintendent of the Bradford Town Mission, but for whose persevering efforts and admirable arrange-

¹ See Appendix.

ments, the following Lectures would probably not have been commenced, at all events they would not have been so well attended. My thanks are also due to the Rev. Walter Scott, President of Airedale College—to the Agents and Directors of the Town Mission, for all their kindly encouragement; and to the Editor of the “Bradford Observer,” for so frequently directing the attention of the Christian public to this simple aggressive agency.

I am delighted to find that these Sabbath meetings in the Mechanics’ Institute are still vigorously conducted and well attended; and I fondly hope that the success of the Bradford experiment will lead to similar movements in other large manufacturing towns throughout the kingdom. These meetings have convinced me that by such a simple appliance, vigorously wrought, and by means of kindly intercourse with the working-classes, a great deal of soured, and sullen, and exasperated feeling may be sweetened by an infusion of genial sentiment, and a vast outfield at present lying beyond the pale of gospel ministration, may be successfully wrought, and made to yield in due time very satisfactory returns.

I call the special attention of working men who may peruse this Volume, to Lectures First, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth, and to the objection about “priestcraft,” as stated and answered in the Fourteenth. I cannot but express my regret that I could not, at the time when the present course of Lectures was delivered, enter more fully into the consideration of popular objections to the Bible. I trust, however, that the two last Lectures upon this topic will be carefully pondered by all who may be perplexed with doubts as to the Divine authority of the Scriptures. I would refer all such to Bogue’s

Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, to Bennett's Lectures on Infidelity, to Cumming's Manual of Christian Evidence, and above all, to the "Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," by an American citizen, now published in a very cheap form by the Religious Tract Society. Of course, there are many bulky volumes on the subject of the Christian Evidences; but the above are sufficient to convince any candid mind, and they are so cheap as to be within the reach of every artizan.

It is assuredly no small degree of satisfaction for me to know that by means of the unexpected contributions of the gentlemen to whom I have referred, these Lectures, imperfect as they are, will find their way to many a working man's home in Yorkshire; and they are now sent forth with the earnest prayer that they may lead not a few of the toiling multitudes to the great and the good Teacher who preached the Gospel to the poor, and whose message of love the "common people heard gladly."

EDINBURGH, *March 15, 1852.*

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THOUGH fully aware of the growing interest in every thing which concerns the welfare of the working classes, I was not prepared for the measure of success which has attended both the delivery and the publication of these Lectures. The first impression of two thousand was exhausted in little more than three months: thanks to the kind friends in Bradford who disposed of seven hundred copies in half an hour. But what most of all I rejoice to know, is, that much real good has been done to many who heard these Lectures delivered, and to others who have read them in their printed form. But upon this point, I beg leave to refer to the testimony of the Bradford Town Mission, which will be found in the Appendix to this Volume.

It is to me a peculiarly gratifying circumstance that a book of such humble pretensions has been so favourably reviewed. I cannot help thinking that the benevolent character of the aim, and not the manner in which the task has been executed, has helped in no small degree to soften the usual asperity of criticism. However this may be, the present Edition will be found in many respects greatly improved; and it is sent forth with the earnest prayer that every working man who shall read these Lectures, may find his Bible to be what it really

is, "the poor man's book." The Bible may speak for itself, and say in the language of one of its own patriarchs,—“I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.”

A. W.

EDINBURGH, *November 1852.*

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

FALSE IMPRESSIONS.

	Page
Importance of a better understanding between the friends of Christianity and the working classes. Circumstances which have led to false impressions of Christianity and its professors. The Bible emphatically the poor man's book. Its leading men taken from the walks of humble life. Generous character of its commands and institutions in reference to the poor. Contrast between these and other systems of religion. Sympathy of Jesus. False impressions not to be wondered at. Mission of the Bible. Address of Kossuth. Robert Nicoll's eulogium. "The Ha' Bible,"	17

LECTURE II.

THE WORLD IN DARKNESS.

Condition of the world without a Divine revelation. References to ancient Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. Confession of Socrates. Contrast between ancient philosophers and Jesus as to affectionate interest in the poorer classes. Ancient and modern heathenism had a fair trial—results. Reasonableness of a Divine revelation,	36
---	----

LECTURE III.

THE DAY-SPRING FROM ON HIGH.

Divine interposition in behalf of man. Various steps in this—selection of Abraham—deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt—prophets—apostles—"the great Teacher"—completed revelation. Sense in which the sacred writers were inspired. Spiritual agency as affecting mind and matter—viewed in connection with the doctrine of inspiration. The Bible a divinely inspired book—proofs of this. Analogy between nature and revelation. The expression, "word of God,"—how to be understood as referring to the whole Bible,	52
---	----

LECTURE IV.

OLD TESTAMENT—ORIGIN AND COMPLETION.

Page

Analogy between nature and revelation. Partial views of either defective and dangerous. Old Testament canon—Pentateuch or five books of Moses. Proofs of their antiquity and genuineness—internal evidence—Samaritan Pentateuch—references made by Jesus and his Apostles. Testimony of Josephus regarding all the books of the Old Testament. Completion of the canon—division of books. Ancient catalogues—Septuagint. Who completed the Old Testament canon? Existence of rival sects overruled for preserving the ancient writings entire—Proofs of this entirety, 70

LECTURE V.

NEW TESTAMENT—ANTIQUITY AND GENUINENESS.

Christianity supported by historical evidence. New Testament—its writers—style—antiquity. References to Boswell's Life of Johnson—to Pilgrim's Progress. Antiquity of the New Testament—how confirmed. Illustration from Macaulay's History of England. Evidence gathered from the first four centuries. Numerous quotations from the New Testament in the writings of friends and foes during that period. Impossibility of forgery. Ancient translations and versions. Testimony of Sir Isaac Newton. The only alternative, 89

LECTURE VI.

THE DIVINE ORACLE ITS OWN WITNESS.

1. Original and sublime conceptions of the Bible; various illustrations of this.
2. Morality of the Bible.
3. All-pervading spirituality.
4. Light which the Bible has thrown around the being and destiny of man.
5. Inlaid with the name and the glory of the Saviour from beginning to end, 112

LECTURE VII.

MISCELLANEOUS CHARACTERISTICS.

1. Impartiality.
2. Authoritative tone of the Bible.
3. For all practical purposes a plain book.
4. Exhaustless fulness.
5. Unity.

6. Harmony between Scripture and science. 7. Literary beauties—simplicity—sublimity—circumstantiality—vast variety of subject and character—figurative language,	Page 126
--	-------------

LECTURE VIII.

THE BIBLE AND THE LOVE OF NATURE.

Nature and revelation, their relative position and claims. The Bible pervaded by an intense love of nature—exemplified in its most illustrious characters—chiefly in Jesus. Lessons from nature. Superior claims of the Bible,	151
--	-----

LECTURE IX.

DESIGN AND DESTINY OF THE BIBLE.

Design: 1st. To unfold the character and purposes of God; 2d. To exhibit the character, position, and prospects of man; 3d. To make known the way of salvation; 4th. To furnish an infallible rule of life; 5th. To conduct to eternal happiness in heaven.—Destiny: Transitory nature of certain forms and embodiments of Christianity; Permanent character of Divine truth; Its trials and ultimate triumphs,	167
---	-----

LECTURE X.

DIVINE ADAPTATION.

Adaptation is alike manifest in nature and revelation. 1st. The Bible adapted to man as a progressively intelligent being; 2d. As a transgressor of the Divine law; 3d. As the child of sorrow; 4th. As the heir of immortality,	185
--	-----

LECTURE XI.

THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO ALL MEN.

Contrast between Judaism and Christianity. The latter, a universal remedy. Instances of this adaptation,—Sir Walter Scott; Burns; John Sterling; Gœthe; Professor Wilson; Flora Hastings; An aged Believer; "Cottager," described by Cowper; two Widows; the world's gathering,	206
---	-----

LECTURE XII.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE

	Page
The Bible and social institutions. Contrast between this and other countries. What has the Bible done in a social point of view? The Past and the Present in our own and other lands. Bible influence in connection with penal statutes, the marriage relation, war, and the Sabbath. Influence on the outer and inner life of man,	222

LECTURE XIII.

THE BIBLE AND SOCIAL ECONOMICS.

Two districts and two families contrasted. "The Cottar's Saturday Night." Important bearing of Bible principles on domestic duties and benevolent agencies; industrious and provident habits; temperance; peace; mental culture. Example from the factories of Lowell, Massachusetts,	240
---	-----

LECTURE XIV.

OBJECTIONS.

The Bible the invention of priests. Religion a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Inconsistencies of professing Christians. Indelicate and impure narratives. Some of the Mosaic institutions unworthy of the Supreme Being,	262
---	-----

LECTURE XV.

OBJECTIONS.—CONCLUSION.

Contradictions—accounted for by frequent transcription. Omission of facts which, if stated, would harmonise conflicting accounts. Eastern customs. Different modes of computing time—Instances of these. Various readings. Concluding reflections,	278
--	-----

APPENDIX.

SUNDAY ADDRESSES FOR THE WORKING CLASSES,	302
---	-----

THE BIBLE

AND

THE WORKING CLASSES.

LECTURE I.

FALSE IMPRESSIONS.

Importance of a better understanding between the friends of Christianity and the working classes. Circumstances which have led to false impressions of Christianity and its professors. The Bible emphatically the poor man's book. Its leading men taken from the walks of humble life. Generous character of its commands and institutions in reference to the poor. Contrast between these and other systems of religion. Sympathy of Jesus. False impressions not to be wondered at. Mission of the Bible. Address of Kossuth. Robert Nicoll's eulogium. "The Ha' Bible."

THE object which has brought us together at this time is one of very great importance to all men, but more especially to those who have been popularly denominated "the working classes." It is, indeed, high time that a better understanding existed between the friends of Christianity, or the church of Christ at large, and the majority of this class, who have been too long inclined to regard one another with mutual suspicion and distrust. Whilst much has been done of late to convince the working classes that Christianity is their true friend, it must be matter of deep regret that this has not been done sooner, and that all the benevolent efforts which have yet been made, should bear so small a proportion to the social

and spiritual evils, so prominent everywhere amongst these classes. Deeply convinced that a kindlier feeling may be cherished, and a better understanding established, between the friends of Christianity and those individuals amongst the working classes who have lost all faith in the Christian religion, and all respect for its professors, by more frequent and kindly intercourse, by mutual expression of opinion, explanation, and concession, I purpose to deliver in this place a series of short and familiar lectures, chiefly designed for the toiling multitudes who are engaged in the crowded factories and workshops of this enterprising and rapidly increasing town. Such, then, is the object which I propose; and however feebly the task may be executed, I cannot but feel that the aim is good.

The theme which I am about to discuss—"The Bible"—is unfortunately associated, to a great extent, in the minds of the working classes, with opinions, prepossessions, and prejudices anything but favourable to its cordial reception. Before proceeding, therefore, at the very outset, to vindicate the claims of the Bible to the high position of a Divine revelation, it seems a necessary preliminary to attempt at least to clear away some of the prejudices that exist in the minds of the working classes generally to the subject which has convened us on this occasion. I shall not enter at present upon the consideration of special objections that may be urged against the Bible. These will be more appropriately brought forward in another lecture. But my object at present will be to clear the ground which is now occupied by unkindly prejudices and false impressions to the truth of Christianity in general, so that any who may have come here under the influence of these may, if possible, be disarmed of that soured and sullen suspicion which is so unfavourable to the candid consideration of any question, and more especially the Bible. Allow me one word as to the delicate position which I occupy; for I cannot conceal from myself that the mere fact that I am a minister of the Gospel may in the

estimation of some, be sufficient to detract from the weight of my testimony, and to lay me open to the charge of party, professional, and selfish motives in appearing before you, and that in all my pleadings for the Bible, I must be considered as an interested party, whose very *living* may be regarded as at stake in the issue of the question about to be discussed. In answer to this, I have simply to reply, that, though a minister of the Gospel, I do not appear at present in the midst of you in any professional or official capacity. I divest myself entirely of this in meeting with you. I wish you to do the same, and to regard me as one of yourselves, who has great interests in common with you, and which must lead me, apart from all other considerations, to examine impartially the claims of the Bible, whether it be of God or of man. I appear amongst you entirely of my own accord, and wholly upon my own responsibility—unasked, unpaid—the representative of no religious denomination, movement, or agency in town. I have a few thoughts on a great subject to lay before you, not from a mere professional position, but from the position which you occupy yourselves as working men, and from a spirit of friendly concern in your best interests.

I know not a little of your hostile environments—your privations, sufferings, and struggles; and it is from this position that I would plead for the Bible, deeply convinced that it is your best friend, and that no scheme for the amelioration of your social condition, based on principles hostile to this book, will ever succeed in doing you any really substantial good.

There is much in the social condition of the great bulk of the labouring class, which leads them to look with soured, and even exasperated feeling, at the religion which professes to be drawn from the Bible. This is more especially true of those operatives whose wages are low—whose trade is subject to frequent depressions—who have had to contend most with the grasping spirit of competition, with the appliances of machinery, and who have, in short, been treated in too many

cases by their employers as if they were mere machines, *as so many hands*—neither endowed with affection nor possessed of rights. When a man is obliged to live “from hand to mouth”—when the once bright horizon of hope is wholly overcast with clouds, and one fatal depression of trade after another drains his resources, weakens his energies, lessens his self-respect—when the dark night of want gathers around his wretched home, where his wife becomes reckless like himself, and his children pine for bread—in such circumstances as these, and when there is all the additional aggravation of looking upon the gilded pomp and splendour which have followed in the wake of commercial enterprise—when the extremes of poverty and wealth thus meet, it is not easy for the man who feels, and who has felt for years, the cold pressure of the former, to cherish anything like tender thoughts either of God or of man. He feels in his very poverty, in his very suffering and struggles—which in too many cases, alas! are aggravated by intemperate habits—a justification, as it were, for strong and daring unbelief, and a kind of satisfaction that he can harbour his own dark thoughts both of the one and the other. It has not seldom been my lot to see, even in the midst of all these unfavourable circumstances, the family altar, beneath the roof-tree of pious poverty, daily surrounded by a family long out of employment, and on the very verge of actual want; and not seldom have I heard the earnest prayer as it rose from a father’s bleeding heart,

“That He who stills the raven’s clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide,
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.”

But such scenes are but seldom witnessed in these circumstances; and to the jaundiced view of the poverty-stricken masses, the Bible is in league with the rich and the great—with the merchant who has amassed his gold—with the manufacturer who has succeeded in his enterprises, and who has done so, in the estimation of many of the working classes,

whether right or wrong, at their expense ; and thus, in many instances, acrid suspicion and fierce contempt are engendered in the bosoms of many of the employed towards their employers, who may be members or office-bearers in Christian churches, and through them the same feelings are directed against Christianity itself. Whether there is just ground for this charge against employers or not, it is not my province at present to inquire. In many cases it is doubtless true, but, thank God ! there are many honourable exceptions ; and Bible principles, rightly apprehended and followed out, will increase the number of these. But, in the meantime, the reasoning of many working men is simply this reasoning, false and cruel, at least so far as the Bible is concerned, however justly drawn it may be from certain embodiments of so-called Christianity—"the wealthy merchant—the successful manufacturer—the man with the gold ring—the gay clothing, the goodly apparel, the rich and the aristocratic, are the men whom the church delights to honour, and to whom the clergy are ever anxious to pay court ; but as for the famished thousands, for those who would gladly toil if they could but get it, and for those who toil as if working for death itself, the Bible cares but little, and the church and her priesthood far less." Such are the dark thoughts which, accompanied with fierce invective, find vent in many a workshop, and in the midst of many a group of workmen, when brought together at a leisure hour. But whilst there is much sad truth in some of these statements, and whilst the circumstances are much to be deplored that have forced such a painful conviction upon the minds of many working men, the Bible surely is not to be blamed ; for if our social condition is bad, even with all the Bible influence that is in operation, what would the condition of the working classes be without the Bible, and all the benevolent appliances which it has called into being ?

Our social condition is indeed a problem. Have we not the largest fleet in the world ? Are our ships not the swiftest and the strongest ? Are they not known all over the globe ?

Have they not visited every shore? Have they not returned with the produce of every clime? Have the last fifty years not been unrivalled in the history of the world for improvements and discoveries? Has our country not been foremost in the march of intellect? Fifty years ago was there one town lighted with gas? one river ploughed with steam? one county girded by the iron road? one benevolent institution for a thousand that now exist? Was the great Atlantic bridged by steam? or the still sacred waters of the Ganges and the Nile chased up their banks by an ocean and river god more powerful than they? Were the remotest parts of the country linked together by the lightning wire, annihilating space and time, transmitting intelligence from one metropolis to another, as if the whole wire were instinct with life, thought, feeling, and eloquence? And yet, after all these improvements, these amazing discoveries, these astonishing results, the poor are still poor, and poorer still than ever. In *desperate recklessness*, they are glad to seize upon any solution of the sad problem, and to look upon the Bible and its friends as the chief obstructions to social progress, whereas all the while it is the very want of Bible principle controlling and guiding the heart of society at large, which has produced all this confusion and sad anomaly in our social condition. Bible principles can remedy all this, and they will yet do it. The spirit which God has breathed into this book will yet bring light out of darkness, and order and beauty out of chaos. It must be admitted that there is much wrong, much out of joint, in our social condition; but surely the Bible is not to blame for this. The reason of all this confusion is simply because our fallen world has not yet been guided by its principles, nor pervaded by its spirit. In the meantime, let every working man be assured that this is emphatically his book, and that there is not one book in the whole range of literature that has done more, or will yet do more for him, or that is more worthy of his confidence and affectionate regard.

It looks upon him in a most kindly spirit, and with an

earnest desire to do him good. The greatest of its heroes were taken from the humble walks of life. David was a shepherd boy upon the mountains of Judea; Moses kept the flock of Jethro on the far-stretching solitudes of Arabia; Elisha was following his oxen at the plough, when Elijah the Tishbite, who also seems to have been reared amidst the obscure retreats of humble life, threw his inspiring mantle around him. The prophets were not dandled upon the lap of ease, but theirs was a life of rugged poverty, struggle, and toil. Jesus himself was the greatest poor man that ever lived; and the men that He chose for his own immediate followers, to spread his religion after He was gone, were for the most part, in point of worldly circumstances, much in the same position with the fishermen that are to be found every day upon any of our coasts. Whilst the Bible is adapted to all men, and whilst it never sacrifices any class to another, it contains many special injunctions of a benevolent character regarding the poor. It denounces the oppressor, the unjust judge, and enforces kindness and liberality to the poor of the land. It maintains the cause of the poor man, as regards the just payment of his labour; and if his troubles are many, the consolations which the Bible has specially addressed to him are proportionably great. If you will read carefully some of the appointments of the Mosaic dispensation, you will find that many of these were strikingly characterised by a most benevolent concern for the interests of the poor. In proof, you may consult the following passages:—Deut. xxiv. 6, 17, 19, 21. Exod. xxiii. 11. Deut. xv. 7-11. There are many others that show the kindly consideration of the sacred writers in the circumstances of the poor; as for example, “Woe unto him that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” Jer. xxii. 13. “I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right.” Mal. iii. 5. Some of the finest strains of Bible poetry have been consecrated to the service of the poor. Take a few specimens that come first

to hand:—"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in trouble." "Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." "Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor." "Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them." "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord: and that which he hath given will He pay him again." "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth Him hath mercy on the poor." Psal. xli. 1; lxxxii. 3, 4. Zech. vii. 9, 10. Prov. xxii. 22, 23; xix. 17; xiv. 31. What a solemn remonstrance is the following, which occurs in the prophecies of Isaiah:—"The spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord of hosts. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him?" The judge upon the bench is by an express injunction of Moses urged in the most solemn manner to respect the rights of the poor:—"Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the poor in his cause: thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger nor of the fatherless." And Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, in language stern, abrupt, and rugged, denounces the judges of Israel in his day, "because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes." On the other hand, the good king Josiah, for his faithfulness and impartiality in the administration of justice, is warmly commended, and held out as a pattern to his degenerate son:—"He judged the cause of the poor and the needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know Me? saith the Lord." Jer.

xxii. 16. It is almost needless to multiply quotations from the Bible on such a theme as this ; but there is a feeling on the part of many who have not read the Bible for themselves, that it speaks in words of special flattery to the rich and the great, whilst it has altogether overlooked the interests of the poor. This objection is like many others that are brought against the Bible, the result of superficial reading, or of no reading at all. If more passages were required, I might turn your attention to the black catalogue of Israel's guilt, as detailed by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxii. 29, where one of the grievous charges which he presents against his countrymen is this : "The people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and the needy ; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully."

How very different are all these scriptural appointments and statements compared with most of the ancient codes of laws, which were very harsh and cruel to the aged and the poor ! We are informed by several ancient writers that the Caspians, when they became old, were put to death. "The disciples of Woden were immolated when they grew old and became seriously affected with any disease. There was a law at Caos, ordaining that persons who had not the means of subsistence should sacrifice themselves, and that those who had attained the age of sixty years were obliged to meet death by combating in the circus. Ælian says, the old were required to kill themselves, in order to leave a sufficiency for those who remained.

"In all the governments and empires of the East, the people were held but of little account. In Rome they were fighting slaves ; in Sparta helots ; in Athens idle vagabonds ; and throughout the whole ancient heathen world the masses of the people were degraded—brutalised by political despotism. To this general rule the Jewish republics are an illustrious exception. The true elements of human liberty and happiness are not to be found in the Roman and Grecian laws, but in the leading institutions which emanated from

the Great Ruler of the world, as typified in the Jewish government.”¹

Before the introduction of Christianity, and in all countries not affected by the benevolent spirit of the Jewish Scriptures, the temporal and spiritual necessities of the poor must have been all but entirely neglected. They were considered by the ancient teachers of philosophy as altogether beneath their regard, and they did not come within the reach of any scheme of philanthropic effort. Jesus alone stood pre-eminently forth as the teacher and the friend of the poor.

One of the peculiar glories of his kingdom, as depicted in the glowing words of prophetic vision, was this—“He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.” “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.” Psalm lxxii. 4, 12, 13. And when He did appear on earth, did He not show himself, in a special manner, the friend of the poor? His miracles of healing were wrought, for the most part, in their behalf; his walks of mercy were amongst the afflicted and the poor; the widow at Nain, who followed, weeping, her only son to the grave, was made to rejoice, and the agony of the Syro-Phenician woman was changed into the opposite extreme of joy; the blessing of sight was lavishly bestowed upon the blind beggars of his day; the famished multitudes were fed; and He seems to have felt nowhere so much at home as beneath the lowly roof-tree of the cottage at Bethany, where Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus dwelt. He seems to have attached more importance to this—the climax of his work of mercy—“to the poor the Gospel is preached,” than to any or all of his miracles of healing. If kings and princes, and rich merchants and governors, are brought before us on the stage of Bible narrative, the humble poor, such as fishermen, tent-makers, herdsmen,

¹ Blakey's “Temporal Benefits of Christianity.”

carpenters, purple-sellers, and women, busily engaged amid the duties of home, also play a prominent part in the great drama of Bible life. In addition to all this, the Bible has brought the Sabbath, with all its blessings, to the toiling multitudes in this and other lands. This of itself should be sufficient to enlist the sympathies of every working man in behalf of this book. I have dwelt all the longer upon this, that whatever may have been your feelings hitherto in reference to the Bible, or the conduct of those who profess to believe it, you may feel assured that the Bible at least, in itself considered, wears a most friendly aspect towards the poor, the toiling, and the down-trodden—frowns upon all injustice, oppression, and fraud—and aims at nothing short of the universal reign of peace and love.

“But how can we possibly believe this,” you are ready to say, “when we look at the glaring inconsistencies of those who profess to be guided by the Bible? Pray, what better are they than we? In many respects are they not worse? We make no religious pretensions whatever, and are therefore not to blame; but your ministers, and elders and deacons, and members, what are the most of them, but whitened sepulchres?—the grasping and the covetous—who, for the most part, never move a single inch in the cause of the people, or manifest the slightest sympathy in their struggles, but would rather screw the workman down to the lowest farthing—the abettors of oppression, the patrons of vested rights and interests, the friends and the flatterers of the rich; and with such men, because they may be better to do in the world in point of purse, but not in principle, the Bible, and those who profess to believe it, are in league. Have you Christians no contentions, no divisions, no unseemly strifes? have you no haughty overbearing priests, no purse-proud, selfish, dishonest men? And what are we to think of the Bible, if such be its fruits?”

Such language as this, doubtless, expresses the feelings of many thousands amongst the working classes; but in all candour, whilst they have much reason to blame and recri-
mi-

nate, this is surely an extreme view of the case. Pray, do not rush so rapidly and so sweepingly to your conclusion. I admit at once the fact in sorrow, that such things do exist as you have described, but they are not to be traced to the cause you mention. Surely the hypocrisy, the inconsistency, the Christian contentions, the want of sympathy, of which you speak, are not to be charged against the Bible. These are not its fruits, but the very reverse. Study the life of Jesus, the Divine man of sympathy and sorrow, and examine the lives of those who have truly imbibed his spirit ; in short, read the Bible for yourselves, and you cannot with any candour or consistency affirm, that the conduct of which you complain, and which his religion most heartily abjures, and which all his true followers most deeply lament, is the native growth of the Christian faith. "It is for a lamentation and a woe," that you have such good reason for reiterating such a charge ; but if it is directed against the Bible, as it is for the most part, then it is a charge manifestly unreasonable and false. In this town, we happen to live in a very dark and smoky atmosphere, perhaps more so than is to be found in any town in England. What then ! is it because the sun is at fault ? is it because there is no blue vault above us ? or are the winds of heaven to blame for not carrying off this huge smoke nuisance ? To blame either the one or the other of these for the dense smoke and the sooty atmosphere in which we live, is just about as reasonable as to blame the Bible for the inconsistencies of those who profess to believe it. The Bible is just as little accountable for these, as the sun is for the dense clouds of smoke that are gathering overhead, and shutting out its struggling beams. These clouds obscure the light of the sun, and so do the inconsistencies of professing Christians the light of Christianity to a world lying in wickedness ; but surely neither the sun nor the Bible can be rightly charged with the one or the other. Wherever Bible truth is received in the love of it, men will be truthful, kind, sober, and pious ; and if others who profess to love the Bible are not so, the good and the true who have

proved themselves to be such by a long life of steady well-doing, are not to be involved in the same sweeping condemnation with the others, as if every lover of the Bible were a knave. Although some bad coins are in circulation, this is not to vitiate the whole current coin of the realm. The mint is not to blame, the die is not at fault, but they who are issuing base coin.

And yet this is the very argument which is frequently resorted to in many a factory and workshop, and at the corner of many a street, and beneath the shade of many a village tree, where, at a leisure hour, the sons of toil "do congregate." These first and false impressions are most unfavourable to a calm and candid perusal of the Bible; and prepare the way for other arguments, or rather popular invectives, such as that priestcraft or religion is with its ministers all a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence—the obstruction of all social progress—an incubus upon the human mind—in league with those who are most opposed to all political freedom, or slowest to move in the cause of the people; and they who follow the teachers of Christianity are looked upon as so many silly, priest-ridden dupes. If such false impressions as these exist—and that they do exist to a great extent cannot for a moment be doubted—then it is not to be wondered at that the Bible is discarded even before it is read, and Christianity is regarded as having outlived itself, and as no longer fit for the times. Thousands with such impressions as these, which have gradually grown upon them from the social circumstances in which they have been placed, such as poor homes, bad times, want of sympathy and kindly interest on the part of the Christian portion of the community, infidel associates, and, alas! intemperance, which makes sad havoc with a man's religious susceptibilities and principles, become an easy prey to the reckless impugner of the Bible or the political demagogue, whatever opinions may be broached by the one or the other. Whilst these impressions are false, cruelly false, they are really not to be wondered at. Many

dark and dingy homes—many densely crowded alleys, have not yet been penetrated by the sympathies of the Gospel. These are unfelt, unknown. The police, the house-factor, the tax-gatherer, have come upon their respective errands, but these dark regions are unsunned by the light of the Gospel, and it is no wonder though thousands of the population have sunk down into utter indifference as to all religion, or have contented themselves with a mere superstitious observance or traditionary belief, or retired, soured and sullen, behind the dark and frowning intrenchments of infidel malignity and scorn.

Cruel is the lie which they cherish, and which they seek to spread over the cankered souls of all who come within their reach. Stern and cruel have been the circumstances of many a working man who has lapsed into unbelief; but I cannot refrain from telling him, that in such a lapse, whatever he may think of it, and whatever cause he may assign, he has been of all the most cruel to himself. His infidelity has inflicted a double wrong, and a deeper wound. If his social circumstances have been most ungenial—if his brother has been selfish and unkind, he has been cruel to himself, and by his own infidelity has inflicted the deepest wound upon himself. Let working men everywhere know, that the Bible is their true friend; and that, after all, an intelligent love of this book, and a consistent practice of its precepts, is the surest and the shortest way to attain the high destiny which is before them, and, for the present, the best companion amid their troubles and their sorrows. Let them be assured of this, that there are many ministers of the Gospel, and many friends of Christianity, who cherish the deepest interest in their welfare, and who are ready to help them in their struggle, upwards and onwards, to a better social position,—many benevolent hearts, who are anxious to do them good, if they but knew the way, and these even amongst the classes—the wealthy, and the ministers of religion—upon whom they have been accustomed to look with the least favourable regards. There never was an age when there

was a greater desire felt to give the position of the working man a more candid and kindly consideration than the present, or when more ameliorative measures were put into operation in his behalf. And to what do you owe this, but to the fact, that the generous spirit of the Bible is, in its urgent demands, meeting with a readier and a fuller response?

You may have received many false impressions of the Bible, not from your own perusal of this book, but merely from the expressed opinions of some of your associates, or from reckless and superficial books, which give but a miserably one-sided view of the question. If every reckless statement against the Bible is gladly received—if every penny pamphlet hostile to it is eagerly bought up and read—if every apparent discrepancy is magnified, triumphantly rehearsed, and maliciously distorted—if every corner of the street argument against it is fondly remembered, to be brought up again on some other occasion, why should its great defenders, such as Leland, Watson, Butler, Wilberforce, Horne, and Chalmers, be altogether unread? or, better still, why should not the Bible be heard or read in its own behalf? But this rejection of the Bible, merely on account of the impressions of others, is not to be wondered at, since a celebrated infidel writer has frankly confessed, that he had not a copy of it in his own possession.

The fault of many is, that they form their opinions of the Bible, not from any candid examination of its contents, but from what they see, as developed in the history or religious life of individuals or sects. You must learn to discriminate between what is really in the Bible and what is not—between what is embodied in its pages and what is purely indigenous to sects and systems—between what is of Divine principle and what is merely of human growth, before you condemn the Bible for errors with which it cannot be justly charged. The fault of others is, that if they do read the Bible, they do so not only under the influence of prepossessions against it, but with the distinctly cherished wish that it *should be untrue*. They come to it with false impressions; and they not only do not

wish these to be removed, but rather that they should be confirmed. Everything which tends to do this is greedily received, and the poison is permitted to work its deadly mischief without any antidote being sought for or applied. It is thus that many amongst the working classes, who have never examined the Bible for themselves, have discarded it altogether, partly from cruel misapprehension, from soured and exasperated feelings at social circumstances of a painful nature with which the Bible cannot be charged, and partly from the distorted view of its contents they have received from others.

Let me urge you most affectionately to examine the Bible for yourselves, in a calm, dispassionate, earnest spirit, and under the solemn conviction that much, very much, depends upon the result. In the foregoing remarks, I have merely glanced at some of the prejudices and false impressions which deter many amongst the working classes from a fair and candid perusal of the Bible. Glad shall I be if any false impressions have been softened, or removed altogether, and this book elevated to its proper place in the estimation of working men, the guide of all, but especially the guide and the friend of the poor. Its mission is to bless you—to help you in every right and earnest attempt to heal your social wrongs; and if you will but be guided by its principles, and set yourselves in earnest to the great work of self-elevation, you will find the Bible, after all, a true friend, and the sympathy and the salvation of the Divine Man of Sorrows the best friendship and the highest good which you can possess amid all the hostile environments of your lot, and the struggles and hardships peculiar to your class. The Bible is adapted to all men; but there is no class of the community that stands in greater need of its sympathy, of the practical outgoings of its own benevolent spirit, than the toiling multitudes in our factories and on our fields; and there is no class that ought to cherish a deeper interest in the Bible and its institutions than yourselves; for by so doing you place yourselves in the only position for receiving the full benefit of all those elevating

influences which cannot but promote your social and eternal well-being. There is no class for whom the Bible has expressed more special sympathy, and none whose social position it is more likely to improve. The working man who has an intelligent regard for this book and its institutions, will be distinguished for steady behaviour, industry, and piety; and these assuredly are the very elements upon which all true social and spiritual elevation must be based. Deeply convinced of this, it is with no small degree of earnestness that I commend the Bible to your careful and affectionate perusal. There may be much in your social circumstances to justify, in your apprehension, a course of alienation from this book, and feelings of suspicion towards all who profess to believe it, and more especially towards the ministers of religion. I do not seek to underrate the evils which you have long felt, nor to justify the conduct of those who profess to believe the Bible; but I seek to vindicate the claims of this book to your affectionate regard, and to your careful study, upon its own intrinsic merits, and apart altogether from the conduct of either one or another.

There is one name that has recently drawn forth the sympathies of men in every rank and condition of life throughout the whole of the civilised world, but more especially the working classes—a name which is dear to liberty and patriotism—Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot. Let his words, lately uttered in this country, when he was presented with a Bible in the German language, be remembered, and deeply pondered, by all who are labouring in the great cause of human freedom, and especially by every working man. The illustrious patriot, turning to those who presented him with the Bible, uttered these memorable words,—“I suppose you present this book to me because you think me a religious man, not for any merit, because it is a necessity to every honest and thinking man, and because it is the most rich and fruitful source of those sentiments and those feelings, which lead to happiness in this world, and bliss in the world to come. I shall value it, because I take religion to be the most

rich source of consolation, which I wanted so often. Being a religious man, and because religious, as well an enemy to superstition, intolerance, and fanaticism, as, on the other hand, the friend of freedom, I readily confess that it is from this great book that I have learned the principle of loving my neighbour as myself, and strength and courage to act in the great cause which has always been the guide of my life. Judge from this how I prize this gift to me, presented on the part of some ladies, and of which a copy was also presented by an honourable working man to my wife at Winchester. This, sir, will remain as the choicest gift I have received."

There is another name that ought to be fondly cherished by the working classes of this country—it is that of Robert Nicoll—but a few years ago the editor of the "Leeds Times," who, with all the fervent aspirations of the poet, and all the untiring zeal of the patriot, wore out his precious life in the cause of the people "ere it was noon." This son of genius—this youthful patriot, who raised himself from the back of the counter in a small grocer's shop to a high position amongst the self-taught literati, and poets, and eminent practical reformers in this country, has left behind him perhaps the finest eulogium upon the Bible which is to be found within the whole range of poetry, the glowing strains of Pollok, in his "Course of Time," not even excepted. The stanzas are so beautiful, and so appropriate to the object which I have in view, that I cannot resist the temptation of quoting the whole of them, as a proof that the youthful poet and reformer was sustained amid all his own hard struggles by the consolations of the Bible, and felt, amid all his intense desire and earnest efforts for the elevation of that class from which he had sprung, that all these were in vain, if cherished and prosecuted apart from the spirit and principles of this book

CHIEF of the Household Gods

Which hallow Scotland's lowly cottage homes !

While looking on thy signs

That speak, though dumb, deep thought upon me comes.

With glad yet solemn dreams my heart is stirr'd

Like childhood's when it hears the carol of a bird !

The mountains old and hoar,
 The chainless winds, the streams so pure and free,
 The God-enamel'd flowers,
 The waving forest, the eternal sea,
 The eagle floating o'er the mountain's brow,—
 Are teachers all; but O! they are not such as thou!

O! I could worship thee!
 Thou art a gift a God of love might give;
 For love, and hope, and joy,
 In thy Almighty-written pages live!—
 The slave who reads shall never crouch again;
 For, mind-inspired by thee, he bursts his feeble chain!

God! unto Thee I kneel,
 And thank Thee! Thou unto my native land—
 Yea to the outspread earth—
 Hast stretched in love thy everlasting hand,
 And Thou hast given earth, and sea, and air—
 Yea all that heart can ask of good, and pure, and fair!

And, Father, Thou hast spread
 Before men's eyes this charter of the free,
 That all thy book might read,
 And justice love, and truth and liberty.
 The gift was unto men—the giver God!
 Thou slave! it stamps thee man—go spurn thy weary load

Thou doubly-precious book!
 Unto thy light what doth not Scotland owe?—
 Thou teachest age to die,
 And youth in truth unsullied up to grow!
 In lowly homes a comforter art thou—
 A sunbeam sent from God—an everlasting bow!

O'er thy broad, ample page,
 How many dim and aged eyes have pored?
 How many hearts o'er thee
 In silence deep and holy have adored?
 How many mothers, by their infants' bed,
 Thy holy, blessed, pure, child-loving words have read!

And o'er thee soft young hands
 Have oft in truthful plighted love been joined;
 And thou to wedded hearts
 Hast been a bond—an altar of the mind!
 Above all kingly power or kingly law
 May Scotland reverence aye—THE BIBLE OF THE EA'!

LECTURE II.

THE WORLD IN DARKNESS.

Condition of the world without a Divine revelation. References to ancient Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. Confession of Socrates. Contrast between ancient philosophers and Jesus as to affectionate interest in the poorer classes. Ancient and modern heathenism had a fair trial—results. Reasonableness of a Divine revelation.

ACCORDING to the views of some infidels, who regard the Bible and its advocates as a great obstruction to human progress, the world must surely have been in a most happy, free, enlightened condition, when there was no Bible, or when its earlier fragments were confined to a handful of people occupying but a very small portion of the globe. Without the Bible, then, was man happy, enlightened, and free? Was that the golden age in the history of the world? Was that the reign of reason without any darkness—of liberty without any restraint—of justice without any mixture of wrong? Was that the hey-day of human happiness, when God, and life, and immortality had not yet been brought to light? No! darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Without the Bible, and simply by his own unaided reason, did man rise to a right conception of his Maker—did he discover the true relation in which he stood to the Supreme—did he erect an infallible standard of morality, and exercise a steady belief in a future state of being,—in short, without the Bible, did he realise and fulfil the great end for which he was created, and all this in a way conducive to his own happiness as an immortal being, and quite in harmony

with the principles of the Divine government and the character of God?

Will the history of the world, or the experience of man himself, bear him out in affirming that he has done all this without the Bible, and that the light of nature is itself a sufficient guide? If you are not altogether blinded—if you are not altogether deaf to the voice of your own experience, you cannot but see that the history of the world is but a loud and emphatic utterance of the fact that a Divine revelation was required, and “that the world by wisdom knew not God.” To this topic let me call your attention in the present lecture.

The world was in darkness, and man required Divine light. He could not, by his unaided reason, discover a remedy for the sore evils by which he was environed, or rise to anything like the full conception of his own destiny, or the perfections of God, or the homage which was his due.

In proof of this, consider the degrading notions which the ancient heathens, even the wisest of them, entertained regarding the nature and the worship of God, their consequent laxity of morals, and the uncertainty and doubt with which they contemplated a future state of being. On all these points, the noblest intellects of the ancient heathen world were enveloped in darkness. The history of ancient and modern heathenism affords a melancholy proof of this. “By virtue of faith” (in the Christian revelation), says a learned writer,¹ in a somewhat quaint and rallying strain, but nevertheless with great force and truth—“rustic and mechanic idiots now do in true knowledge surpass the most refined wits; and children prove wiser than old philosophers; an idiot can tell us that which a learned infidel doth not know; a child can assure us that wherein a deep philosopher is not resolved: for ask a boor—ask a boy educated in our religion, who made him, he will tell you God Almighty; which is more than Aristotle or Democritus could have told: de-

¹ Dr Barrow.

mand of him why he was made, he will answer you, to serve and glorify his Maker ; and hardly would Pythagoras or Plato have replied so wisely : examine him concerning his soul, he will answer that it is immortal—that it shall undergo a judgment after this life—that accordingly it shall abide in a state of bliss or misery everlasting ; about which points neither Socrates nor Seneca could assure any thing : inquire of him how things are upheld—how governed—how ordered, he will presently reply, by the powerful hand and wise providence of God ; whereas, among philosophers, one would ascribe all events to the current of fate—another to the tide of fortune—one to blind influences of stars—another to a confused jumble of atoms : examine him about the main points of morality and duty, and he will in a few words better inform you than Cicero, or Epictetus, or Aristotle, or Plutarch, in their large tracts and voluminous discourses about matters of that nature.”

The great bulk of the human family must have known before the world was overrun with idolatry that it was their duty to love and serve their Creator, and that their happiness would just be in proportion as they yielded a loving obedience to all his commands. But this knowledge was soon corrupted ; it was soon blended with error ; the clear vision by which man perceived at first the palpable impress of Divine attributes in every part of the material universe was soon darkened by the mists of error, and the whole world lapsed into idolatry. Men “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” It is a melancholy thought, that at one period in the history of the world, there was probably not a single worshipper of the one living and true God to be found on the face of the earth. I refer to the period when the children of Israel were slaves in the land of Egypt. There were doubtless a few feeble rays of light in the ancient traditions of that people, which struggled through the gloom, and perchance conducted a pious aspiration now and then upwards to the Source of all light from the bosom of some oppressed Israelites. But such light at best was but dim

and feeble ; and if the bondage of that land was oppressive, the moral gloom, the pall of spiritual death, which hung over the nations, was no less so.

We have no means of ascertaining for how long a period after the creation, men retained their knowledge of the one living and true God ; but it is very evident that idolatry, in its more primitive form, began at a very early period, and spread rapidly till it covered the whole earth. Such was the condition of the world long before an ancient writer left on record the following testimony :—" Yea, shouldst thou wander through the earth, thou mayest find cities without walls, without a king, without houses, without coin, without theatre or gymnasium ; but never wilt thou behold a city without a god, without prayer, without oracle, without sacrifice. Sooner might a city stand without ground than a state support itself without a belief in the gods."

At a very early period in the history of the world, man forgot the only true and exalted object of adoration, but the religious consciousness was as yet not altogether debased ; and the first objects of religious homage, after the great Supreme was himself forgotten, were the most imposing forms of grandeur or of beauty which met the darkened eye of man in the material creation, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements of nature. But the evil did not stop here,—the worship of the heavenly bodies, which has been designated Sabæism, was succeeded by hero worship, or the deification of distinguished mortals after death. One false notion led to another, and the whole world rushed into idolatry of the grossest form. Wherever man beheld any object in nature, it did not matter what it was—whether the eagle or the crawling reptile, the oak or the onion, the lion or the cat—if imagination could but invest them with any thing symbolical of what was supposed to reside in supernatural powers, such as wisdom, strength, beauty, swiftness, mystery, vengeance, and lust—such objects were regarded as sacred—religious homage was paid to them, and temples were reared for their service. This was not the case only amongst

savage tribes, but this was true of the most refined and civilised nation that existed in the remote ages of antiquity.

Take Egypt for example—the cradle of the sciences, the nursery of ancient genius, the land of wonders in architecture, sculpture, and bold and magnificent undertakings that are still the admiration of the world; and yet, notwithstanding all the advancement her ancient inhabitants had made in civilisation and the fine arts, they worshipped not only the heavenly bodies, but the most grovelling reptiles, and even the vegetables which grew in their gardens and fields. The patrons of the ancient arts and sciences—the nation that built the hoary pyramids which are still the wonder of the world—were worshippers of beasts! The ancient sculptures that have been found amid the wondrous ruins of this land, are a melancholy proof of this. The hand of genius in the olden time has grouped together clusters of beasts, birds, reptiles, and flies, in the most disgusting and unnatural relations. These were the gods of the Egyptians. What a sad picture does this furnish of the moral character of the worshippers even at the time when they were famed for wisdom and learning, and all the refinements of the ancient world! This animal worship may in part be explained by a love of symbols; but the true secret lay in the degrading views which the ancients had formed of Deity; and hence their polluted imaginations discovered some attributes of their gods, or some characteristics with which they wished to invest them, in almost every object in nature, however worthless. “Because the hawk soared perpendicularly to heaven and descended perpendicularly to the earth, it was thought to measure all space, and became the symbol of the Divine mind. It could gaze too upon the sun, and bear the most powerful light, which was an additional reason for its use as the sign of a god. The goat was an animal remarkable for its lust; it denoted therefore the productive power of nature.”¹ This is but a specimen of many hundreds of a

¹ Ancient Egypt. Religious Tract Society.

similar character that might be mentioned. The more intelligent classes might occasionally perceive some spiritual meaning, or some lofty idea, in connection with these symbols; but their effects upon the great mass of the people must only have been to pollute and degrade.

The discoveries which have recently been made at Nineveh, the long lost capital of Assyria, and the gigantic statues of winged bulls and winged lions, with the complacent, intelligent countenance of man, are a striking though melancholy proof that animal worship prevailed through the whole of that vast empire. Some of these monster statues, sketches of which you must have seen, have been recently lodged in the British Museum; and thus, after the lapse of many ages, probably not much less than three thousand years, we are permitted to gaze upon the idol gods against which Jonah preached, and which are almost as entire as in his day, and which have been disinterred from their long-lost resting place, as if for the very purpose of demonstrating to this distant age, and to all ages yet to come, the feebleness of man's unaided reason in rising to anything like a right conception of the Supreme Being, and the necessity that existed for a Divine revelation.

If we turn to ancient Greece, the darkness of idolatry only deepens, even in that classic land where Homer sung, and Demosthenes spoke, and Appelles painted, and Phidias sculptured, and Socrates and Plato taught. Yes! even here, in the best days of Greece, the abominations that profaned all her temples, and were considered essential parts of religious worship, cannot be named. The gods were the creation of minds that were polluted and debased, and some of the most gorgeous and costly temples of ancient Greece, even in the days of her best statesmen, philosophers, painters, orators, sculptors, and poets, were little better than magnificent temples of lust on a large scale. Ancient Greece, notwithstanding all its music, poetry, and philosophy, must have been, in a moral point of view, a very sink of corruption, where the highest art consecrated its service to the highest

licentiousness, and served to add the more attractive charms to a worship that was most debasing and impure.

Nor amid these dark and shameless details of ancient heathen worship can the Romans be passed over in silence. During the Augustan period, which in literature, and art, and science, has been called the golden age, when the mind had attained the highest elevation ever known among heathen nations, the mass of the people were more idolatrous in their habits, and consequently more corrupt in their lives, than ever they were before. The subject is such, as in reality to forbid, in such a place as this, anything like details. The festivals in honour of Flora and Romulus, not to mention others that might be named, were always associated, even in the days of Rome's best orators and poets, with unbounded licentiousness. There are dark shadows in the history of imperial Rome, to which no counterpart will be found in the history of modern London, Paris, or Vienna, notwithstanding all their concentration of vice. You could not turn to more polluting pages than those which record the lives of the ancient heathen gods. There was nothing too debasing in the annals of sensuality, or of other crimes, for the performance of which the example of some god might not be referred to as a plea.

Terence, a celebrated writer of comedy, who lived about a hundred years before the Christian era, introduces a young profligate justifying his lewdness by the example of Jupiter, and excites himself to licentiousness by the example of the gods. "*Shall he do these things who shakes heaven with his thunder, and may not I, poor mortal, do the same?*"

"The pictures now secreted at Naples, as taken from the walls of Pompeii, and the descriptions given in the early part of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, to which those pictures furnish such signal corroboration, show only too clearly that it is not in all respects true that the former times were better than these."¹

¹"The Age and Christianity," p. 40.

Now, let it be borne in mind, that such was the character of heathen idolatry even at the time the eloquence of Cicero was heard in the Forum, and the polished though tainted verses of Horace, and the sublime strains of the Mantuan bard, were repeated in the banquet halls of Augustus. It was not the idolatry of a barbarous nation that had never come under the influence of civilisation, but the idolatry of a warlike and highly civilised people whose military prowess had been felt to the ends of the earth. Greece, even in the brightest of her days, when she raised her temples that have ever been regarded as models of architectural beauty, and produced her beautiful statues, that have ever been the admiration of the world, was, in a moral point of view, a very mass of corruption, and daily becoming more so from the baneful influence of her idol worship. The same may be affirmed of Rome. There were, indeed, some noble exceptions in both countries—some who did not run to the same excess of riot; some who rose above the debasing superstitions of those times; some who repudiated the impure deities and condemned the actions ascribed to them; some who, if they did not reject entirely the system of Polytheism, had at least a more correct, exalted, and spiritual idea of the great Supreme; but such noble spirits were few and far between. They were like glimmering stars here and there in the horizon of that deep, dark night, which only served to make the darkness more visible.

The darkest night of idolatry was not without the light which the wisest philosophers could shed around them; it was not without the refining influence of the highest art; the discordant ravings of idol worship were not without the sweetest strains of music, nor the oracles of the gods without the sublimest utterances of the muse. Yet what were all these! and what did all these accomplish for the social or religious well-being of the great bulk of the people, or even for the wisest philosophers themselves! The horrors of idolatry only increased. The world became worse instead of better. A thicker moral darkness spread everywhere—a darkness so

thick and oppressive, that it was felt by the wisest sages themselves, who almost despaired of light; and yet, notwithstanding all the humanising influences of poetry, philosophy, painting, sculpture, eloquence, and music, "the world by wisdom knew not God." Amid this darkness, Socrates himself, the brightest luminary that ever rose upon the benighted heathen world, frankly confessed that it was necessary that man should wait for some divine teacher who would instruct them how to behave towards the gods and towards one another. Was not this something like an instinctive, or rather, let me call it, an inspired, longing of this great soul for Him who was the desire of all nations?

What was the condition of the poorer classes in the cities and towns of ancient heathenism, and also in Judea itself, as to social position, education, comfort, and as to anything like affectionate interest manifested towards them by those who were their superiors, may be gathered from the following passage which occurs in the New Testament:—"But when Jesus saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Matt. ix. 36. Such a passage as this, by the way, whilst it shows the utter want of affectionate interest in the poor on the part of those who, at that time, might be regarded as the upper classes, presents us with some beautiful traits in the character of Jesus—"He was moved with compassion" when He beheld the multitudes, and He was the first great teacher who had ever looked upon them with the earnest desire to promote their real good. None of the schools of philosophy had ever put forth one earnest aggressive effort to better the condition of the great body of the people. The wisest philosophers of ancient times regarded them as the *profane rabble*, and left them to grow up amid all the degrading influences of impure and cruel superstitions. The Saviour, on the other hand, set himself to the arduous work of teaching the poor, and "the common people heard Him gladly." They owe much to the Bible for the more

generous spirit which has of late been manifested in their condition, and bad as that may still be, how much worse would it have been but for the benevolent spirit which pervades this book, and which every man who reads it is taught to cherish towards another, without regard to rank or station! All need the Bible for support in trial, and none so much as the poor; and there is no class for whom it has manifested so much concern. Where will you find in any of the books of ancient philosophy the same sentiments of kindness as the Bible has expressed, or the same benevolent institutions as it has appointed in behalf of the poor? In this respect the Bible presents a very striking contrast to the sacred books of any other religious system; and, consequently, the condition of the poorer classes in Christian lands must be much better than it was in the palmy days of ancient Greece and Rome. Which of their teachers ever thought of identifying themselves with the interests of the poor? and which of them could ever have held out the cheering assurance which Jesus did to an assembly of his poor countrymen in reference to the necessities of life, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"? I claim once more for the Bible the proud distinction, that it is emphatically "the poor man's book."

The ancient heathen world had a fair trial. It had philosophers, and poets, and enthusiastic disciples and patrons of the fine arts; reason was left to take its boldest flights, and poetry to indulge in its highest imaginings, and sculpture to produce the breathing statue in every form of ideal beauty; and painting committed to the living canvass every imagining of a refined voluptuousness; but all this did not lead back the world to the eternal Father, because the wisest philosophers never knew Him as such; they never could apprehend Him in this paternal relation; and therefore their teaching fell powerless upon the masses of the people, for they had no plain practical attractive truth to communicate about God, but at the best cold and barren speculations, and dry, metaphysical abstractions, with which the people could have no

sympathy, and before which the Dragons of the heathen world could never fall prostrate and broken.

“What was the theology of pagan times? A compound of traditional information, degraded superstition, pernicious idolatries, and unintelligible mysticism. There was nothing good or abiding in it; nothing which could sensibly affect, except for the worse, the huge fabric of civil society. Low artifice, terrors, omens, auguries, prodigies, oracles, judicial astrology, divination, and the suggestions of evil spirits, were not calculated to exercise a friendly influence over the social nature of man, but rather to degrade and corrupt it. A system of this kind could only generate evil, darken even the light of nature herself, pervert the naturally generous feelings of mankind, and plunge them deeper and deeper into irremediable folly and vice. The fanciful drapery which poetical genius or a profound philosophy threw over it, could but imperfectly conceal its innate deformity. All heathen testimonies tell us that vice in its most revolting shape stalked about, not in solitary and isolated cases, but under the professed sanction of the national religion and its degrading rites and ceremonies.”¹

If such, then, was the character of ancient heathenism; if the unity, spirituality, and purity of the Divine nature were altogether unknown to the great mass of the people; if their minds were filled with the grossest conceptions of the Deity; and if all these tended to incite the multitude to impurity and lust, it is very evident that there could be no fixed standard of duty, no pure system of morality, when the gods themselves were recognised as the patrons of the most flagrant crimes. They were in many instances distinguished for lying, debauchery, cruelty, theft—the patrons of war in its most horrid forms. What, then, could be the morality of the people? A sad, but true, answer to this will be found in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, a testimony which is true of heathenism in every age and in every part of the world.

¹ Blakey's "Temporal Benefits of Christianity."

Without a Divine revelation man has no certain standard of duty, and he is left to grope his way in darkness and fear. If this is true as to the question of morals, it is no less so as to a future state of being.

The native longings of the human soul, like the sigh of the captive exile for his fatherland, whispered immortality, and at times almost rekindled the extinguished or expiring hope of a better clime. But man heard not the still small voice, or if he did, it fell upon his slumbering spirit like the faint and dying echo of sweet but distant music—like the soft and mournful cadence of a melody of youthful times, long since forgotten, till the tones of some sweet voice or instrument throw their enchantment over the spirit, and awaken the melancholy pleasing reminiscence of the thoughts, the feelings, the companionships of bygone days. Thus even in ancient times, amid all the darkness of idolatry, were the depths of feeling in the human soul occasionally stirred by the breathings of immortality. But the spell was soon broken. So early and to such an extent was the heart of man under the influence of error, that all its sympathies, instead of embracing steadily a world of all things bright and fair, stretched out into a chaos of uncertainty and gloom, where, through the misty shades of error, sweet sounds were sometimes heard, and bright visions were sometimes seen, which made the pulse of hope quiver with joy, and sent a new stream of life through the ample bosom of earth, but, alas! only to be frozen in its joyous course by the icy hand of doubt and fear. A few of the wisest and the best in ancient times probably had a steady belief in the immortality of the soul, but if they had, they were but very few who were so favoured; the great mass of the people were left to grope their way amid the shades of doubt and error.

If you turn to modern heathenism, the fact is no less evident that man, without a Divine revelation as to correct views of God, morality, or a future state of being, is groping in midnight darkness. Here also you behold the same dark features, the same cruelty, impurity, revenge, and lust, as

characterised the ancient heathenism of Rome. In modern, as well as in past times, the saying is true,—“the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty”—“where there is no vision the people perish.”

If there is still much to be deplored in the social condition of our own country, notwithstanding all the good which the Bible has effected, what, alas, must be the social condition of those countries where Bible influence is altogether unknown! In such countries man has no right conception of the nature and worship of God. The Supreme Being is regarded more as a demon than as the Father of mercy who pitieth his children. If man can realise and fulfil the great end for which he was created, without a Divine revelation, why has he not succeeded better in those countries where it has never even been alleged that one has been given? Why have art, and science, and all human philosophy, failed to satisfy the longings of his soul and conduct him to peace? If man required no Divine revelation, then surely his own unaided reason, the light of nature, or call it what you will, would have served him better than it has ever yet done, and he would never have become the wretched creature that he is in heathen lands, where he is the slave of spiritual wickednesses and cruel superstitions, which frequently lead to a vast sacrifice of human life. Not to multiply instances, take only for example Western Africa, where it is still the practice, in order to prove the guilt or the innocence of any suspected party, to have recourse to the fearful ordeal of eating the poison-nut; and when a chief or a man of influence dies, his wretched slaves are immediately put to death, that they may be of service to him in the world of spirits, or that they may serve as an offering to appease some sanguinary god. This is but a specimen of what man is in a heathen land, on which the light of Divine truth has never dawned. In all such countries, for the most part, “might is right”—brute-force is law—man is the slave of crushing evils—and woman, the presiding genius of purity and peace in all lands where the Bible is revered, is, in every country without it, the most

abject, helpless, down-trodden creature on the face of the earth. It is needless, however, to present you with the sad details of modern heathenism, as a proof of what man is without a Divine revelation. These you can read for yourselves on the page of the traveller, or on the records of Christian missions.

If man could not rise by his unaided reason to a right conception of his Maker—if he could not, even in the days of Socrates, and with all the wisdom of Greece, discover the true relation in which he stood to the Supreme—if he could not, in any past age of the world's history, erect an infallible standard of morality, nor exercise a steady belief in a future state of being, nor realise and fulfil the great end for which he was created, then assuredly as little could he do this at present, or in any future age of the world, apart from a Divine revelation. Both ancient and modern heathenism have had a fair trial, and the result is—"the world by wisdom knew not God."

What have any of the more recent infidel writers left us that would serve at once as a guiding and cheering star of hope to man in his perilous and troubled journey through life? What can you find in their writings which may be regarded as a perfect rule of duty, or as an unfailing source of consolation amid the varied trials of the present? They too have left the world in darkness, notwithstanding the vantage ground which they occupied; and were there no guide for man but that which they have attempted to furnish, his condition would indeed be hopeless, and his destiny perplexing, unmeaning, and sad. If Voltaire, and Herbert, and Hobbes, and Hume, are to be our guides, then, alas! their light is but darkness, which, instead of conducting to more light, only led them further into the mazes of error, and bewildered and betrayed many inquiring spirits since their days. If there is no better guide than what they and others of the same school have left us, then, in that case, I would prefer to perish amid the profoundest darkness of heathenism itself, rather than be cheated and lured to destruction by the

meteor glare of infidel philosophy. Better no light at all, than the lightning gleam which only flashes to destroy, and leaves all darker than before.

I have thus given you but a bird's-eye glance, and scarcely that itself, of the sad condition of the ancient and modern heathen world, as a proof of the feebleness of human reason to lead man to such a knowledge of the one living and true God, as will expand the intellect, purify the heart, and ennoble and dignify and bless his life. I have only presented you with a few hints at best, and must leave the further prosecution of the subject to yourselves; but still the dark and rapid sketch that has been drawn, will be sufficient to show to any candid mind that there existed an absolute necessity for a Divine revelation, if it was intended that man should know his Maker so as to love and serve Him, and be happy in the discharge of commanded duty. "Learning, genius, philosophy—all have done their best, and we have seen the result. By means of such teaching, some great moral principles have been elicited, and characters of high moral worth have been formed. But the great questions concerning the soul, the Deity, the hereafter, these have been left," by all ancient philosophers who had not the light of revelation, and by all modern philosophy that has discarded it, "in dark and painful uncertainty; and the effect of this uncertainty, in respect to mankind at large, has been to leave them without the direct and authoritative restraint necessary to save them from becoming the slaves of their appetites and passions in all possible forms."¹

If man was not, therefore, born to be tormented by secret longings and aspirations, inherent in his very nature—did not all these circumstances, which have been but briefly referred to, and many others which might be brought forward, render a Divine revelation absolutely necessary, if man was not to be altogether an abortion and an anomaly in the creation of God?

¹ "The Age and Christianity," p. 105.

O surely it might have been presumed, with Socrates, that after idolatry, and the fine arts associated with it, had done their best to elevate man—but instead of accomplishing this, he only became the more degraded, till the whole world in bondage groaned for emancipation—the great and the good Father of all spirits, and the God of all flesh, would not allow his own children thus to grope for ever in the darkness of ignorance and death, but would reveal himself once more in the simple majesty of truth, and would employ such an instrumentality as would utterly abolish the idols, and would lead men into the liberty of a new religion and a new life! O surely it might have been presumed, with Socrates, however much the modern infidel may doubt it, that God would break the awful silence and speak to man in the voice of love—that God would look again upon the darkness, deeper far than that which brooded over the face of the deep, and say again, “Let there be light!” O surely, if the condition of the world at first, when it was dark and without form and void, required the light which God commanded to shine, and there was light—no less, O surely no less, did the moral condition of the world, amid the darkness, and impure and cruel abominations of idolatry and superstition, require the light of Divine revelation to arise and shine upon the benighted nations of the earth! And if God spake amid the darkness at first, and there was light, no less assuredly has He spoken again amid the moral darkness that enveloped the world, “and has given us a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.”

LECTURE III.

THE DAY-SPRING FROM ON HIGH.

Divine interposition in behalf of man. Various steps in this—selection of Abraham—deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt—prophets—apostles—“the great Teacher”—completed revelation. Sense in which the sacred writers were inspired. Spiritual agency as affecting mind and matter—viewed in connection with the doctrine of inspiration. The Bible a divinely inspired book—proofs of this. Analogy between nature and revelation. The expression, “word of God,”—how to be understood as referring to the whole Bible.

In the previous lecture, your attention was directed to the appalling moral darkness which covered the earth in the absence of a Divine revelation. From the history of ancient and modern heathenism, we may certainly draw these two conclusions—first, that it was impossible for any idolatrous system of worship to improve in any respect the social or the spiritual condition of man. The longer it continued, the more desperate, the more deadly, it became. Had no Divine arrangement been made for the destruction of idolatry, it would have destroyed man, and plunged the whole race in irremediable wretchedness and ruin. Still further, it was impossible for man to extricate himself from the crushing weight of idolatry. Any attempt to do so was like a man rolling a stone up a steep hill when his strength is quite inadequate to the task—the moment the effort is relaxed, the ponderous mass which he attempts in vain to roll to the summit, comes back upon him with more crushing force than ever. Man’s condition was thus hopeless without a Divine interposition in his behalf. It is to the fact that such an

interposition was made, that I now call your attention in the present lecture.

God in mercy willed that the darkness which had settled down upon our world should be dispelled. When physical darkness brooded over the earth, He said at first, "Let there be light, and there was light." One physical element of discomfort was removed by an act of power which introduced a new element of gladness and beauty. And when spiritual darkness covered the earth, God willed that it should be removed by the gradual introduction of a new element—the light of truth—and this by means adapted to the moral nature of man. In the earlier stages of the world's history, there were doubtless a few who retained some knowledge of the one living and true God, who perceived in some measure the glories of his perfections, and who lived under the influence of the powers of the world to come. But almost every vestige of this knowledge seems to have been lost when we advance to the time of **Abraham**, who, although belonging to that line of families in which the knowledge of the Supreme Being had been hitherto preserved, was an idolater like the other members of his family, and all the inhabitants of the earth. That this knowledge might not be altogether lost, that the dark reign of idolatry might not be universal and permanent, Divine providence selected this patriarch, and called him away from his country and his kindred, and placed him under such a system of teaching and miraculous interposition as could not fail to impress him deeply with that knowledge of the Supreme Being which was known to his forefathers, but which had been long obscured, if not altogether lost, amid the deepening darkness of idol worship.

In this selection you behold, as it were, the *first important movement* of Divine providence in the onward march of religious freedom, which would only terminate with the abolishing of the idols, and with the diffusion of gospel truth throughout the whole earth. The knowledge communicated to this patriarch was preserved in the families of Isaac and Jacob.

Their descendants became a numerous people in the land of Egypt, where they were subjected to all the evils of slavery. To convince this people of the being and perfections of their father's God, to confound the idol worshippers of Egypt, to follow up the selection previously made by another on a much larger scale, and accompanied by a series of stupendous miracles, this people were led forth by a mighty and an outstretched arm, and placed under a system of tuition the very best adapted for a people such as they were—rude, semi-barbarous, and untutored—when newly emancipated from the bondage of Egypt. That such was the social and moral condition of the Israelites when placed under the leadership of Moses, seems a very reasonable supposition from the circumstance that they had long been subjected to all the degrading influences of slavery. The moral design of the miracles which accompanied the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, was doubtless to rescue our world from the growing evils of idolatry, and by such an interposition in behalf of an enslaved and down-trodden people, God bound them to himself, and to one another, and prepared them for that moral discipline which was to fit them for their high destiny. In their departure into the wilderness you behold as it were an entire nation, rude in their habits and modes of thinking, *going to school*—the seminary of Jehovah, who would separate them from the rest of the nations, hedge them in from idolatry, and by a series of privations in which their faith would be tried, and stupendous signs and wonders by which their confidence in him would be strengthened, and by means of certain rites and observances adapted to their imperfect conceptions—their views of his character would be enlarged, and they would become the national depository for preserving the truth of God in the midst of a world's idolatry and wickedness. Let but any one candidly consider the circumstances connected with these great movements for the deliverance of our world from idolatry, and he cannot but feel convinced that Divine wisdom characterised all these, and that both in teaching and in miracle there was a

striking adaptation to the people and the times. The Divine procedure in the separation and teaching of this extraordinary people has been most philosophically detailed in a little book published by the Religious Tract Society, entitled the "Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," which I very warmly recommend to your perusal.

From this nation arose the prophets, some of whom were contemporaries, others again were separated by long intervals of time; and reckoning from Moses, whom we may regard as the first inspired writer, to Malachi, with whom the voice of prophecy died away, and whose mantle of inspiration fell upon no successor under the old economy, we have a period of one thousand years during which the revelation of God's will was gradually moving onwards to its completion. "In the fulness of the times," the Great Teacher, the Light of the world, appeared himself, and He and his evangelists completed the revelation which the ancient prophets had begun.

Jesus was pre-eminently the inspired revealer of the Divine will. He was the "manifested Divinity" in our nature. The prophets and the apostles who were also chosen as the medium of communicating the revelation of God were *inspired men*. We not unfrequently speak of the inspiration of the poet and the orator, when both, rising far above the ordinary level of human thought and feeling, are borne aloft upon the storm of impassioned rapture, or on the calm expanse of keen, clear, piercing intellect, or on the fiery chariot of far-reaching imagination, that rises into the blue profound and leaves the mists and the cloudland that envelop our world far behind. Comparatively speaking, then, the language and the feelings of a poet such as Milton, or an orator such as Demosthenes or Chatham, may be deemed worthy of the term inspiration, but only by way of *contrast* with the language and the feelings of ordinary men. But rapt and elevated as the poet's fancy, and impassioned as the orator's feelings, may be, their rapture and their strong emotion, however much these may transcend the experience of ordinary mortals, do not embrace by any means the whole amount of meaning

involved in the term inspiration as applied to the sacred writers. What, then, do we mean when we affirm that the sacred writers were inspired?

When we employ the term inspiration in connection with the sacred writers, we mean that they, as the medium which the Divine Being employed, in communicating his will to men, were, when so employed, in a special manner under the infallible guidance, the elevating influence, the enlightening power, of the Holy Spirit. Their inspiration was not the result of the poet's fire or the orator's rapture; their inspiration did not spring from the varied themes of ordinary interest or surpassing sublimity which they discussed—they were not caught away merely by the inspiring genius of poetry nor by the impelling power of an impassioned eloquence; but they were in a special manner, as the organ through which revelation was made, guided, and taught, and influenced, by the great and benign Author of that revelation himself, and they were so only when employed as the medium of Divine communication.

Is there anything impossible, any thing unreasonable in such a doctrine as this?

There is doubtless a great and all but impassable gulf between the human and the Divine—between God and man; but surely it can be bridged over, and the human and the divine brought together, so that intercourse may be established and heavenly words of instruction and consolation spoken to the wounded and sin-stricken spirit of man. If he may not cross this dark gulf which yawns between him and all holy intelligences; if he can only stand on the one side of the yawning abyss, and cry in the name of all humanity, with outstretched arms and with a longing heart, after he has wearied himself in the fires of his own kindling, and spent his strength for nought and in vain, and every adventurous flight to gain the opposite shore and unite himself with the Divine has failed,—“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” “Come over and help us!” If this is the instinc-

tive and all but universal feeling of humanity, who shall deem it impossible or unreasonable on the part of the great Father of spirits to bridge over the wide gulf which yawns between Him and his wretched and helpless children by a revelation of mercy? Who shall deem it impossible for Him to speak one word that shall be heard and felt by the inmost soul of man, or to send one brightening ray of hope athwart this dark abyss of sin? He knows every avenue of approach to the soul of man, for its complex and mysterious spiritual mechanism is the workmanship of his own hands. He holds the key that unlocks the secret chambers of the soul. No gulf can separate Him from the spirit of man. He has access at will, and He can reveal what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man at all conceived. Is this a mystery? If so, be not startled, it is a fact which meets you as much in the book of nature as it does in the volume of revelation. There are many spiritual agencies in nature, the power and the operation of which can only be traced to the will of the Creator. We only know of their existence by the effects which they produce. Matter, which would otherwise remain dormant, useless, and powerless, is, through the operation of unseen spiritual agency, imbued with a tremendous power, and seems almost a sentient and intelligent being. "We see effects produced which originate in no cause appreciable by our senses, yet we infer that they must have a cause. As, for instance, in the production of motion or mechanical power. When we see a mill erected and put into operation, we can trace the succession of cause and effect up to the water, the flow of which turns the first wheel; but the flow of the water from a higher to a lower level we readily resolve into the power of gravitation, which we find is a universal principle or quality attaching to matter, everywhere recognised, but nowhere explained, and resolvable alone and directly, as far as we can determine, into the almighty power of the Creator. The wind is also an invisible power, employed for navigation and machinery, that affords a

similar illustration. We detect it only by its effects; yet we infer its existence, though it is a power altogether invisible. A steam-engine is another example of the same thing. We can trace the whole series of results up to the steam, and that again to the heat; but the heat is as invisible an agency as the wind or gravitation.”¹ Yet these invisible agents influence matter, and produce results corresponding to their power. Advance a step farther into the spiritual world, and you find in your daily experience one mind secretly yet surely influencing another, either for good or for evil. What vast effects have spirits such as Plato, Aristotle, Mohammed, Milton, Bacon, or Voltaire, had upon the destinies of nations and of the world at large,—effects vastly benign or baneful, according to the spirit by which they were actuated! Yea, what influence has your own nearest friend had upon your character and conduct in life! These effects, then, in the world of matter or of mind, are all the result of spiritual influence; and shall invisible spiritual agency be brought to bear upon matter in such a way as to produce prodigious results; shall mind in the daily intercourse of life be brought to act upon mind in such a way as to produce the most beneficent or the most baneful effects; and yet shall the great Creator be shut out from the possibility of all intercourse with the soul which He has framed, and the secret springs and avenues of which He must know so well? Is it not just as reasonable to suppose, that if God so will, He can place himself in contact with the soul of man in a thousand various ways, as that an invisible spiritual agency can affect matter so as to put it in motion, and imbue it with a thousand times the power of the war-horse, or that mind at a vast distance of time and space can affect mind for good or for evil? God sits supreme as the Father of spirits, at the head of all spiritual agency, whether in the material or the spiritual world, and his intercourse with, or his influence over the mind of man, may certainly be granted on the one hand as readily as we admit

¹ Redford's Divine Authority of the Scriptures.

the effects of invisible spiritual agency upon matter, or the influence of one soul upon another. Admitting this, then, which in all reason we must do, I can see no difficulty in the doctrine of inspiration specially confined to the sacred writers, or in the doctrine of Divine influence at large.

I have spoken of inspiration in the meantime simply as a fact. The proof for this will come afterwards. It was meet that man should be the medium of a Divine revelation intended for himself. We cannot explain how the prophets or the apostles felt when under the influence of the Divine afflatus; nor is this at all needful for our belief in the fact that they were inspired. Neither can we explain the mode of operation by means of which they were guided, elevated, and enlightened by the Divine Spirit; nor is this at all necessary for our belief in the fact that they were inspired. He who has formed the spirit of man has direct access to it by many avenues. He may place himself in contact with the soul by means of

“Those blessed angels He sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe”—

those blessed and powerful spirits,

“Who for us fight and watch, and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love, and nothing for reward,
Oh! why should heavenly God to man have such regard?”

He may flash upon the spirit of man the rays of celestial light, beaming straight down from the excellent glory; and the tongue of the prophet may be touched as with a live-coal from off the altar of God. He may spread before the soul in glorious vision the whole panorama of a particular era, or of some special series of events; or He may approach the awe-struck seer “in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men.”

For the gradual development of revelation, stretching onwards from Moses in the desert to the time when the

apostles wrote in Judea and Rome, and in different places of Asia Minor, there was a period of at least 1500 years. During this long period God raised up at various intervals, and in different places, the prophets who were gifted to teach according to the circumstances of the times in which they lived, and the character of the people whom they addressed. They claimed to speak in the name of the Most High, and the credentials with which they were intrusted as his ambassadors, were sufficient to show to the most faithless, "that they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We do not read that all the prophets, from Moses to Malachi, were endowed with the power of working miracles, but there can be little doubt that they were; and it might have been affirmed of every one of them, as it was of Christ himself, though not in such a high sense, "Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which Thou doest, except God be with him." They called attention to the message which they brought by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, in the exhibition of which "*they tolled*," as it were, "*the great bell of the universe*," and prepared the heart of an entire nation to feel the extraordinary message which they were about to deliver. If you grant inspiration at all to the ancient prophets or apostles, you cannot deny them the power of working miracles, for they were invested with such a power for the purpose of proving to the world that they were sent from God.

The Saviour himself in his teaching referred to these writings as inspired records. He appealed to them as containing the words of eternal life, and urged upon his hearers the duty of searching them. He assured them that heaven and earth would pass away, but that not "one jot or one tittle" of inspired declaration would pass away, till all should be fulfilled. He appealed to the three great divisions of Old Testament writing, the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, as all containing prophetic allusions to his advent, to his life, to his sufferings, and his death, and which, as a proof of their inspiration, were all fulfilled. The apostles, in like manner,

referred to the ancient writings as inspired records, and in proof of this they called them "the oracles of God." One has affirmed that all Scripture is given by inspiration, and another has borne this testimony, "that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "God hath spoken by the mouths of all his holy prophets since the world began." Such testimonies as these are quite confirmatory of the fact that the three great divisions of the ancient Hebrew writings, viz., the Law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, were composed by men who were inspired to speak and to write what God deemed necessary for our instruction.

Passing from the Old to the New Testament, we find the Saviour claiming to be an inspired teacher sent from God, who came a light into the world; and can we really entertain any doubt upon this, or call in question this high claim, if we but calmly and dispassionately consider the Saviour's life, example, teaching, and miracles, to which He so often appealed in behalf of the truth of the doctrines which He taught? And there can be as little doubt that the evangelists who have written the four gospels, and the apostles who wrote to the different churches, were inspired. This was necessary in order to the completion of their exalted mission, which was to declare the truth of God, not now to one nation, like the ancient prophets, but to all the nations of the earth. The apostles were left to give a body to Christian truth and doctrine; and how could the obscure and unlettered fishermen of Galilee deal with such new and exalted themes without the teaching of the Divine Spirit? They confirmed the truth they uttered by signs, and wonders, and miracles, and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost. These miracles were performed in almost every possible variety of circumstance, and on almost every possible variety of subject, and the accounts of these have been confirmed by the *very best historical evidence*; and is it possible, upon the principles of a sound theism, to suppose that such miraculous gifts

would have been imparted, for a long series of years, to persons who continued, during all that time, asserting falsehood, and appealing to these gifts for the truth of what they said? No one can suppose this for a single moment, and no one may hastily deny the miracles of the New Testament, so confirmatory of the fact of inspiration, without, at the same time, rejecting the very best historical evidence altogether. The claims of the apostles to inspiration were never called in question by the early church, neither were their miracles ever doubted by the early opponents of Christianity. They were said to be the result of magic; a most untenable supposition; but they were never denied.

There is an ominous desire on the part of many to depreciate the miracles recorded in the Bible, if not to reject them altogether; but if ever a revelation was made at all to man by God, as doubtless there has been, I cannot see how (all circumstances taken into account) this could be done, so as to convince man that it was a communication from Heaven, apart from miracles. The very fact that the Romish Church has tried to bolster up a system of iniquity by a pretended imitation of these miracles, is a proof that they were performed. "Current notes soon awaken a disposition to counterfeit them. Popular medicines soon bring into the market apocryphal inventions wearing their names; the effort to pass off the latter is the best proof of the estimation of the former."

Others again are of opinion, and they do not fail to express it, that if miracles have ever been performed in support of a Divine revelation, they are as much required now as ever, and ought to be repeated to every succeeding generation to be of any avail in attesting the truth of the Christian faith. But who does not perceive that the very regularity and frequency thus demanded would defeat the very end which miracles were intended to serve? If continued from age to age, they would cease to be regarded as miracles, and would come to be looked upon as but the natural development of fixed laws. They were, doubtless, necessary at the time

they were performed, in order to confirm the Divine commission of those who wrought them, and the Divine character of the truths they uttered. But when Divine revelation was completed and confirmed, there existed no further need for miracles. These have been fully attested by the best historical evidence, and do not require to be repeated. As well demand the creation of a new world in the presence of every succeeding generation of men, in proof of the existence of God, as demand that miracles shall be performed, in every age, in confirmation of the Christian faith.

In one respect, at least, miracles were designed to serve the same purpose in the scheme of revelation, as the gigantic mountains, those dread upheavings that seem beyond the control of all law, were designed to do in the material world. They fill the soul with all absorbing thoughts of the infinite, the omnipotent, the sublime; and the beholder, convinced that nothing but omnipotence could do this, feels as in the immediate presence of the great God. In like manner, miracles were designed to *arrest attention*, to break in upon the uniform processes of law, the monotony of every day life, and to constrain every candid mind to the conclusion, that he who wrought the wonders, and gave utterance to the heavenly oracle, must be of God. We might have had a world without mountains, it might have been a vast, monotonous plain, but who would not greatly prefer it as it is? and we might have had a Bible without miracles,—all might have been subjected to the square and rule of our every day experience, but in that case the Bible would have resembled our world had it been a vast, level plain, and would have lacked many of those irresistible evidences of the wonder working power of God. If the mountain system in our world is one of utility, beauty, attraction, magnificence, power, no less so is the system of miracles, by which a Divine revelation has been confirmed. From the summit of the one we behold in the outspread glories of nature new proofs of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God; and looking from that elevation to which the belief in miracles raises us, we cannot

but feel assured that the God whose glory is seen in the firmament, is the same great Being who has confirmed his own word "by divers signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost." It is about as reasonable, therefore, to quarrel with the mountains as it is to find fault with the miracles recorded in the Bible. The everlasting hills tower aloft, and bear upon their summits the marks of almighty power; and miracles, so to speak, are just so many mountains in the scheme of revelation, on whose summits the foot-prints of Deity are no less distinctly seen.

As to the Bible itself there are many things recorded in it which the sacred writers must have known, independently of a Divine revelation; many incidents with which they were perfectly conversant; but then they might not have inserted these in the sacred record, or seen the important connection which these held to higher and ultimate facts, had they not been led to do so by Divine superintendence or direction. Such an inspiration as this—viz., superintendence or direction—which led the sacred writers to insert incidents which they might have omitted, and which guarded them from any serious error in the insertion of these, extends to the whole Bible. In this sense every part of the Bible is inspired. There are many bad actions recorded in its pages, for the purpose of being condemned, and held up as beacons for the warning of future generations. Had the sacred writers been left to themselves entirely without Divine superintendence or direction, they would probably have suppressed them altogether; but they were doubtless directed by a Divine impulse to record these, and though the insertion of them required nothing more than a mere act of the memory, they were, by the same Divine influence which prompted them to insert such deeds, effectually guarded from error. Such portions of Scripture, and other portions that record the sayings of bad men, can only be regarded as the inspired word of God, simply in as far as these portions are there by his direction, and must, like many other things in nature which we are apt to deem unimportant, and even as mar-

ring the general harmony, form nevertheless important and indispensable links in the ascending chain of truth, just as the others, if we could but see this, occupy important places, notwithstanding our low estimate of them in the ascending scale of being. We are but poor judges of what should, and what should not, have appeared in the Bible. The hand of the Supreme is everywhere visible in this book; but here, as in the material world, it is more conspicuously seen in some places than others. In nature there may be what has been termed the barren and waste places of creation, but God is there: the tiniest flowers, the moss, the stunted fern, bear witness to his presence, though the giant oak, or the most gorgeous forms of the vegetable world, bloom not there; and in the Bible there may be what some may deem the waste and the barren places of revelation, where the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley may not be felt, but still God is there. The one is a link in the material world that could not be wanted, and the other is a link in the golden chain of truth, which, if not of the same precious metal, or which, if it contains more alloy than the rest, is nevertheless the workmanship of God, in so far as it has a place, by his direction, in his own word, and could not be taken away without marring the harmony and proportion of the whole. The name of the Supreme Being is not once mentioned in the whole book of Esther, and yet He is there; for what book has more distinctly unfolded Divine interposition in behalf of the down-trodden and the poor? In the material world there are many seemingly barren and useless tracts of country, and yet these, after much patient research, have been found to contain the most precious minerals; and, in like manner, those very portions of Scripture which may seem to the casual reader to be most barren and devoid of interest, will after all repay the earnest and enlightened seeker with the hidden treasures of Divine truth.

Whether the sacred writers were at various times under different degrees of inspiration, or, in other words, whether

they enjoyed at one time a higher degree of this influence than at another, is a question but of very little importance, and cannot, whatever view may be taken of it, at all affect the claims of the Bible to be a divinely inspired record. A question which concerns you far more than this, and which, if you have not yet settled, you ought to settle at once and for ever, is simply this—Is the Bible a Divine communication; were the various writers employed in its composition so guided by Divine influence, that they were preserved from error, and thus enabled, by Divine assistance, to produce this book, designed to enlighten, and cheer, and guide the soul of man in the way of peace? This is the question which you have to settle; and it is indeed matter of thankfulness that the amount of evidence on the affirmative side of this question is so full and satisfactory in every point of view. If miracles are not in themselves a convincing proof of inspiration, you have numerous prophecies strikingly fulfilled—the present condition of the Jews, not to mention any other instance, is in itself a striking fulfilment of many scriptural predictions uttered regarding them more than three thousand years ago—but if all this should still fail to convince, you have doctrines unrivalled for their sublimity, and for their adaptation to the spiritual necessities of man; and moral precepts altogether unmatched for their purity, and for the social and spiritual influence which they have exerted on his outer and inner life. All these, taken together in connection with the character and circumstances of the writers, who, for the most part, especially the writers of the New Testament, were obscure and unlettered men, form a body of proof in behalf of the Divine origin of the Bible, amounting to moral certainty itself.

“But notwithstanding what has been here urged, if any man can believe, that at a time when the literature of Greece and Rome, then in their meridian lustre, were insufficient for the task, the son of a carpenter, together with twelve of the meanest and most illiterate mechanics, his associates, unassisted by any supernatural power, should be able to

discover or invent a system of theology the most sublime, and of ethics the most perfect, which had escaped the penetration and learning of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero ; and that from this system, by their own sagacity, they had excluded every false virtue, though universally admired, and admitted every true virtue, though despised and ridiculed by all the rest of the world : If any one can believe that these men could become impostors, for no other purpose than the propagation of truth, villains for no end but to teach honesty, and martyrs without the least prospect of honour or advantage ; or that, if all this should have been possible, these few inconsiderable persons should have been able, in the course of a few years, to have spread this their religion over most parts of the then known world, in opposition to the interests, pleasures, ambition, prejudices, and even reason of mankind : to have triumphed over the power of princes, the intrigues of states, the force of custom, the blindness of zeal, the influence of priests, the arguments of orators, and the philosophy of the world, without any supernatural assistance : If any one can believe all these miraculous events, contradictory to the constant experience of the powers and dispositions of human nature, he must be possessed of much more faith than is necessary to make him a Christian, and remain an unbeliever from mere credulity.”¹

I cannot, therefore, but regard the whole Bible as the production of men who were divinely inspired, inasmuch as the whole was committed to writing by the special direction of the Supreme Being, brought to bear upon the minds of its various writers. At the same time I do not by any means affirm, that all the sentiments contained in the Bible are just, and all the conduct recorded there worthy of imitation. Far from it. Nor was this to be expected, inasmuch as the sacred writers have recorded in many places the sayings and the actions of bad men. “In the sacred writings we meet with sayings and actions, which are neither wiser nor better

¹ Soame Jenyns.

for being found in them, than if they had occurred in any ordinary history. From the mere admission of any fact into the inspired history, no other conclusion can be warrantably drawn, than that it actually took place, and it was the will of God that we should be acquainted with it—its moral nature, its conformity or disconformity to the standard of truth and rectitude, must be ascertained by some other test than its simple insertion in the Bible. Were clear ideas formed on this subject, some misapplications of passages would be prevented, and some objections which are brought against the inspiration of the sacred books would either not be advanced at all, or would be immediately perceived to be inconclusive and unjust.”¹

The lowest degree of inspiration that I claim for this book, is that of direction on the part of God, an influence which certainly guided the sacred writers in the choice of materials, and guarded them from error when committing these to the page of the sacred record. Of the highest degree of inspiration who can so emphatically speak, for who can limit Jehovah in this direction, or who can accurately define the intervening spaces between the lowest and the highest degree of this influence? But that there was a gradation in this, seems to be established by the varied contents of the Bible—such as the mere genealogical or simple narrative details, and the sublime language of prophetic ecstasy. Whether there are different degrees of inspiration or not, of this, however, I am convinced, that whatever has been recorded in the Bible is there by the direction of its great Author himself, and must be needful and useful either for warning, reproof, comfort, or instruction, whether it relates to the sayings or the doings of good or bad men, to mere simple narrative details, or to the sublimest strains of rapt prophetic song.

The argument to a poem is no less the work of the poet himself than the sublimest passage in his immortal song. In like manner, the simplest narrative part of Scripture may

¹ Dick on Inspiration.

not bear the marks of the highest inspiration, but it is not the less on this account a necessary part of God's great poem of the universe. It is there by his direction, although it may bear but the subordinate place of the argument to the great poem itself. It would therefore be as unreasonable to affirm, that this and the other part of Scripture are not sufficiently dignified for the word of God, and therefore cannot have emanated from Him, as it would be to conclude that the argument to a great poem, because minute and simple in its details, could not have been the work of the poet himself; and it would be as unreasonable to judge of the whole Bible, from a perusal of one narrative passage or two, as it would be to form your opinion of a great poem from the mere perusal of the argument prefixed to each book. If I may use the phrase, you must *go into the Bible* to feel its inspiration, to enjoy its fragrance, and realise its power, ascending at every step, from the simple, the minute, till you reach those towering heights, where the mortal vision of the prophet was dazzled, as he gazed on the glories of the future, and where his soul was all on fire, and his tongue was touched with a live coal from off the altar of God, and you feel that you are reading, in the highest sense, "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," and these none other than the thoughts of the Almighty and his own words. The simplest parts of Scripture are no less dear to God than little children, of whom he has said, "Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones." Take heed, therefore, how ye deal with the Bible. It contains the word of your heavenly Father, and is surely worthy of your careful study, your implicit obedience, and reverential regard.

LECTURE IV.

OLD TESTAMENT—ORIGIN AND COMPLETION.

Analogy between nature and revelation. Partial views of either defective and dangerous. Old Testament canon—Pentateuch or five books of Moses. Proofs of their antiquity and genuineness—internal evidence—Samaritan Pentateuch—references made by Jesus and his Apostles. Testimony of Josephus regarding all the books of the Old Testament. Completion of the canon—division of books. Ancient catalogues—Septuagint. Who completed the Old Testament canon? Existence of rival sects overruled for preserving the ancient writings entire—Proofs of this entirety.

WHERE, then, is the book that comes to us assuming to be a revelation from our Maker? In answer to this, I direct you at once, and fearlessly, to the Bible; and it shall be my object in the few lectures that follow, to vindicate the claims put forth in behalf of this book, as a communication from God. But how shall we know this? How shall we know whether or not the deep silence that hung so long over our world has been broken, and a message from God addressed to our race, in which all are alike concerned? These are questions that cannot be left in doubt or in mystery. It was never intended they should be unsolved. If the Bible contains a revelation from God, it must bear the impress of his own character, his own glorious perfections, like the book of nature. He is alike the author of both; and if there are abundant proofs in the one case to show that the material creation is the work of his hands, there is no less abundant evidence in the other to prove that the Bible is a communication from himself. Here, then, is a book that comes to us

with the highest pretensions; let us examine it, and see if these are well-founded.

I am anxious to impress upon your minds at the outset the vast importance of examining this book for yourselves. But this must not be a *one-sided*, *partial*, and *presumptuous* examination. Here you must be prepared to meet with difficulties, just as the astronomer, the geologist, or the chemist, lays his account to meet with these in exploring the arcana of nature. Here, also, if you would act wisely, your conclusions should be the result of a wide survey, an expansive induction, and not a mere *paltry*, and *partial*, and *prideful* examination. Would it not be unfair to look at nature merely in one aspect, and from this one point of view to pronounce a judgment upon all the different departments of the material world? And it would be no less unfair to the Bible to form your judgment of the entire record from a hasty and perhaps *partial* examination of an *isolated passage* or a *solitary page*; and because that did not meet with your preconceived notions, would it not be most unwise and unfair to consign all the rest to a summary condemnation? The Bible, like the book of nature, must be looked at *as a whole*, and not in isolated, detached, and fragmentary portions; otherwise the result in all likelihood will be doubt, misapprehension, or positive unbelief. You could not much admire the wisdom or the philosophy of that man who should imagine that the dark and dreary mountain-pass in which his cottage was situated, formed the whole world of nature; who had no eye for any other scenes beyond that, and no ear for any other music but the brawling and impetuous murmur of the mountain stream. Neither is that man to be admired for his wisdom or his philosophy, who turns his eye only to one portion of the Bible, upon which perhaps the dark shadows of guilt only rest, and the appalling and struggling utterances of justice are only heard; and who from such a dark and dreary region as this, would form the conclusion that such, and nothing more nor less, is the entire Book of Revelation; forgetting all the while, that just as there are smiling seas,

and plains, and mountains, bathed in sunshine, beyond the limited range of the mountain-pass, so there are bright and attractive manifestations, glorious truths, bathed in the sunshine of purity, love, peace, and goodwill towards all men, beyond the dreary region of threatening, and guilt, and fear. To do justice to nature, I must look at it as a whole,—to do justice to the Bible, I must do the same; and in either case I must not be scared away by *seeming* contradictions, anomalies, and stubborn difficulties, that will only yield to the light of truth, and the intense earnestness of a loving, honest heart.

If you wish to gaze upon all the varied features of an extensive landscape, where the placid, the grand, the terrible, the sublime in nature, are all grouped together, you will rise from the valley to some towering eminence, and from its hoary summit your eye will range over the wide sweep of varied scenery. It will not rest merely upon some detached boulder, some bluff and frowning headland, but it will take in all, till the view is lost in the distant horizon, and the mind retreats within itself in the peace and the calm of a holy satisfaction, and you cannot refrain from worshipping the great God in the wide temple of Nature. And if you would look at the Bible aright, you must ascend from the low ground of prejudice, and pride, and human insufficiency, and from the elevated position in which an honest and a loving heart will place you, look around upon the whole goodly land of promise, till your view is lost in the distant eternity, and your vision dazzled by its coming glories; and, no longer able to resist the overpowering light of evidence that beams upon you from every quarter, you are constrained to acknowledge, that if God is the creator of the material world, He is no less the author of the Bible; and if He has left the impress of his own attributes upon the one, He has no less stamped the characters of eternal truth upon the other. Under the influence of this expansive and generous spirit, with candid distrust of yourselves, with deep seriousness of purpose, humility, and prayer, let me urge you to canvass the claims of this book to be the Word of God.

Before proceeding further, let me call your attention, in this and the following lecture, to the antiquity and genuineness of the record itself.

If ever you have gazed upon an ancient building, such as York Minster or Westminster Abbey, or some of the legendary castles or cathedrals of the olden time, you have doubtless felt anxious to know some particulars regarding their history, such as the age in which they were erected, the name of the founder, and the events with which they have been associated during the lapse of many years. And yet how many may live in the very shadow of these venerable piles, without once directing their thoughts to such inquiries as these! It is so with the Bible. There are some portions of this book that are certainly the most ancient historical records in existence; and whilst not a few have been anxious to ascertain the leading facts connected with the history of this book, it is to be regretted that many who profess to love it, seem altogether indifferent to those historical details, by which not only its antiquity, but its Divine authority, are confirmed. How few even of those who profess to value it, have ever put to themselves the questions, what is the history of this book? when was it commenced to be written, and by whom? and how are we to know that the different books which it contains, and no others, are worthy of being regarded as the oracles of God?

You need not be informed that the Bible is divided into two parts, the Old and New Testament. The former comprises all those books from Genesis to Malachi, which were written at various times, and by various authors, under the Mosaic economy, and which were then, as they are still, regarded as sacred. The latter comprises the writings of the evangelists and the apostles, from the gospel of Matthew to the apocalypse of John, and these writings, in comparison with the former, may be called the New Testament, inasmuch as they were written under the new and better dispensation, and refer to an entirely new state of things.

In this lecture I shall confine myself to the Old Testament.

and I shall endeavour to bring before you some particulars bearing upon the origin and completion of the Old Testament canon, and upon one or two questions intimately connected with this important subject. There is one word in the topic that has just been announced as the subject of lecture, which requires a moment's explanation. The word to which I refer is *Canon*. What is to be understood by this phrase in connection with the sacred writings? This term is employed to designate that list or collection of books, either of the Old Testament or of the New, which have been regarded as inspired or of Divine authority. The term is of Greek origin, and primarily signifies a staff—a measuring rod, the beam of a balance; and hence figuratively a rule or law. Whatever various meanings the early Fathers might attach to this phrase, the stereotyped use of the word for a long time has been to denote that collection of books from Genesis to Revelation, which Christians regard as of Divine authority, and the only rule of faith and practice. “The canon, then, may be defined to be The Authoritative Standard of Religion and Morals, composed of those writings which have been given for this purpose by God to men.”

First, then, as to the Old Testament canon,—if you count the number of books comprised in this, you will find that there are thirty-nine. There are several very important inquiries connected with these, as, when were they written? who wrote them? and on what principles have they been arranged, as they now are, or placed in the canon,—regarded as sacred, whilst other ancient records referred to in the Scriptures, or in the pages of early histories, have been deemed unworthy of such a place? what is the historical evidence which can be produced in behalf of such an arrangement as this? Waiving, in the meantime, the consideration of the subject matter of these books as to narrative, doctrine, precept, or style, what is the historical guarantee in behalf of the antiquity and genuineness of the Hebrew Scriptures? Here are certain books, to the number of thirty-nine, which are denominated the Old Testament, how does it happen

that at this moment these writings are in the hands both of Jews and of Christians, who, however widely they may differ, agree most heartily as to this, that these writings possess not only a very remote antiquity, but are to be regarded as a sacred canon—the rule of life “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished unto every good work?” Both parties are satisfied as to the antiquity and genuineness of these books; on what grounds does this satisfaction rest? These are partly to be found in the Scriptures themselves, and in other historical statements. Permit me, however, to remark, that to do justice to such inquiries as these would require much time and much patient research. All that I can hope to do at present in the few cursory remarks I have to make, will be to present you with at least a few hints that may serve to clear the way for your own future inquiries upon this important subject.

The evidence in behalf of Moses having been the author of the first five books in the Bible, which are commonly denominated the Pentateuch, is certainly much stronger than any which could be adduced in behalf of Homer’s authorship of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. There are several statements within the range of these five books that point to him as their author. He is represented as having written down the account of certain events that took place. It has indeed been objected, that at the date assigned to the Books of Moses, writing had not as yet been introduced amongst the Hebrews; but such an objection is now wholly abandoned. There are frequent references made to a book in which Moses inserted the dealings of God, and the history of his people. The work of writing this book is expressly ascribed to him. The following statement occurs in Deut. xxxi. 24, 25, 26:—“And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the

covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."¹

The national song, so full of stirring recollections, contained in the 32d chapter, and the benedictions contained in the chapter immediately succeeding, are expressly ascribed to him. Doubtless the references to his death and his burial, and, perhaps, other particulars besides these, are the additions or interpolations of some other writers; but can these be considered for one moment as sufficient to destroy either the antiquity or the genuineness of the Pentateuch? Would a few additions or interpolations from another hand than that of Homer be deemed sufficient to destroy his claim to the authorship of the immortal Iliad? This book of statutes, to which reference has been made as having been in the handwriting of Moses, and as having been placed by the side of the ark of the covenant for greater security, is referred to in subsequent parts of Scripture, and would doubtless be preserved with pious care as a national record of great importance. It was preserved amid all the wars and political convulsions of the nation; and though sadly forgotten during a succession of wicked kings, it was, after a long period of national declension, again brought forth and publicly read to the people in the reign of Josiah, like the Bible, when brought forth from the musty shelves of the convent by Luther at the Reformation. And long after the reign of Josiah, in the days of Ezra, at least a thousand years after the Pentateuch had been completed, all the civil and ecclesiastical arrangements were made in this manner, "as it is written in the Book of Moses."

Another circumstance which ought to have some weight in connection with the antiquity and genuineness of the five books of Moses, is the existence of what has been called the Samaritan Pentateuch. The ten tribes who revolted from their brethren seem to have carried with them a copy or copies of the laws of Moses; and when the ten tribes, who

¹ See also Exod. xvii. 14; xxiv. 4, 7; xxxiv. 27, 28. Numb. xxxiii. 2.

formed the kingdom of Israel, were carried captive into Assyria, the mixed race who were sent to take possession of the land, were made acquainted with these laws by the priest who was sent to instruct them. During the successive fortunes of the two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, the Samaritans, or the mixed race, who were sent by the king of Assyria to occupy the place of the ten tribes, remained in the neighbourhood of the former, worshipping the same God, and using the same law. There was great antipathy between the two nations: and so great was this mutual jealousy, that "they had no dealings with one another." John iv. 9. Here, then, are two rival tribes, living in mutual enmity, yet preserving the same sacred books, so that the one could neither add to, nor take from, these, without this being known and instantly checked by the other. The Samaritan Pentateuch is often quoted by the early Fathers. The learned at last began to doubt of its existence; but in the year 1616 a copy was procured amongst the remnant who still worship at Gerizim. Not long afterwards many other copies were procured, so that the Samaritan Pentateuch may now be compared with that which forms a part of our Old Testament canon. The existence of the one is a confirmation of the antiquity and genuineness of the other.

But it is almost needless to appeal to evidence such as this, so long as there is still more convincing proof of the genuineness and Divine authority of these ancient records in the fact, that Christ and his apostles very frequently referred to Moses and his writings, and quoted them, not merely as ancient national documents of great importance, but as inspired records containing the authoritative will of God. There can be no more satisfactory proof than this. Josephus himself, a learned Jew, distinctly refers to the five books of Moses. So far it seems very clear, both from Scripture and other historical statements, that the first five books of the canon have been all along identified with his name. There is evidence in behalf of this much clearer and

much more abundant than any evidence that can be adduced to identify the orations of Cicero or Demosthenes with their respective names. Justin Martyr (A.D. 140) has referred to several poets, historians, lawgivers, and philosophers of Greece, who must have been, judging from the allusions made in their writings, acquainted, either from tradition or otherwise, with the Books of Moses, and who appealed to these long before the days of Justin as being even then very ancient documents; just as a modern historian might refer to Cicero and his works.

Having advanced thus much in behalf of these five books—as to their antiquity and genuineness—let us now see what can be said in support of the other books which form the Old Testament canon. It would occupy too much of your time, and be altogether foreign to the object which I propose in these lectures, were I to go over each book in detail, and adduce evidence in support of the genuineness of each. I appeal, therefore, at once to the testimony of Josephus, an eminent and learned Jew, who was born A.D. 37, and who acted in the capacity of a general in the Jewish war against Rome, and was greatly distinguished for his literary acquirements. His testimony in behalf of the Hebrew Scriptures is most satisfactory and conclusive. In his defence of the Old Testament writings against the attacks of some who called them in question in his day, he says,—“We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times—which are justly believed to be Divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets who were after Moses wrote down what was done in their times in *thirteen books*. The remaining *four books* contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of

human life. It is true our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them."

Such is the important and often quoted statement of Josephus, in reference to the completion of the Old Testament canon. Such a statement is highly valuable in many respects. There were very few better qualified to judge of these writings than this illustrious Jew himself. He distinctly mentions the time when the canon was closed, when there was nothing taken from it, and nothing added to it. This was in the reign of Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes upon the throne of Persia. This monarch, in whose reign, according to the above statement, the Hebrew canon was completed, died in 424 B.C. Consequently there was no part of the Jewish Scriptures added to the list of authorised canonical books later than this. Josephus, in making such a statement, doubtless expressed what was the common belief of his countrymen on this subject. He expressly affirms as a reason for this, that there was no succession of prophets after this period. The last prophet had carried with him the mantle of his office,—it fell upon no successor like that of Elijah, when he parted with Elisha; the oracle was dumb, the voice of prophecy was hushed, till the voice of the Fore-runner was heard in the wilderness in stern, abrupt, and rugged utterances, calling upon the men of his day "to repent, and prepare the way of the Lord."

But here a very important question arises. How do we

know that the twenty-two books mentioned by Josephus comprise the whole of our present canon? How comes it that he has mentioned twenty-two, and we have thirty-nine? This is very easily and very satisfactorily explained. The Hebrew alphabet has twenty-two letters, as any of you may observe, by counting the parts contained in the 119th Psalm, which was divided into as many parts as there are letters in the alphabet. On the same principle the Jews, at least in the days of Josephus, perhaps from some rabbinical or literary conceit, divided their sacred books in the same way, assigning a book to each letter in the alphabet, and they succeeded in doing this, by joining the twelve minor prophets into one book, and classifying a few more on the same principle, till they reduced the self-same thirty-nine books which we have to the number of twenty-two. But this seems to have been a matter of mere arbitrary caprice; for afterwards, in the Greek versions, the books were classified under the number twenty-four, in order, probably, to suit the number of letters in the Greek alphabet. This was effected by separating Judges and Ruth, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and thus regarding them as four distinct books, instead of two, as under the previous arrangement. But such a division as this, or such as the former, did not at all affect either the *quantity* or the *quality* of the canon. The twelve minor prophets still retained their distinctive names, although they were thrown by such divisions as these into one book. From Genesis to Malachi, the Jewish canon, as described by Josephus, is just as it is in the present day, with this exception only, that the writings of the twelve minor prophets were regarded as forming one book. The five books of Moses that he mentions, are, doubtless, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The thirteen books written by the prophets, will include Joshua, Judges with Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel; the twelve minor prophets in one book; Job, Ezra with Nehemiah, Esther, and Chronicles. The remaining four, which he characterises as containing hymns

to God, and rules of life for men, are Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. As to the minor prophets, which form twelve separate books in our Bibles, they were anciently always reckoned one book; so they are considered in every ancient catalogue, and in all quotations from them.

What, then, do we gain by such a testimony as that of Josephus? It is very clear, from what he has stated, that Moses was regarded by the Jewish nation as the writer of the first five books in their sacred records. For a thousand years after his death he was followed by a succession of prophets, who respectively added to the sacred books begun by the great lawgiver of Israel. This line of inspired prophets ceased, according to Josephus, about four hundred years before Christ. There was, during that interval, a succession of writers, some of whom were of great eminence, as several books in the Apocrypha will testify; but their writings were never entitled to the same credit as those which had been engrossed in the sacred records previous to that time. This was a period to which the words of the sacred minstrel might have been appropriately applied:—

“Our signs we do not now behold—there is not us among
A prophet more, nor any one who knows the time how long.”

It was not on account of the lack either of writers or of writings during those four hundred years that the number of books accounted sacred was not enlarged, but it was because those writings, which may be regarded as supplementary, wanted the conclusive evidence, the seal of the prophetic gift, which alone could entitle them to admission into the sacred canon. The fact that such books as the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus were never admitted by the Jews into their canon, or regarded by them as inspired, although they valued them highly, on account of the moral sentiments which they contained, is a proof that *great care* was taken as to the admission of any book to the high rank of an inspired document. The Jews at no time have ever admitted the books

which are styled apocryphal to this high rank. They find no place in the canon of Josephus, nor in any of the catalogues of the sacred writings left us by the early Fathers, and surely this may be regarded as sufficient evidence as to the non-canonical character of those books.

In addition to the testimony of Josephus, as to the origin and completion of the Hebrew canon, there are other sources of proof as to its antiquity and genuineness in the ancient lists or catalogues of the books contained in the Hebrew Scriptures. These catalogues have been left us by several eminent men, such as Melito of Sardis, who flourished about A.D. 170, and Origen, whose name is brilliantly associated with the middle of the third century, and several others of distinction in that and the following age. These ancient catalogues are valuable, in so far as they serve to show, that the same books of the Old Testament, which are now regarded as of Divine authority, were at that time in existence, and were then, and for centuries before, treated with all the reverence which is due to an inspired record.

Another circumstance of no small weight in testing the antiquity and genuineness of the Jewish Scriptures, is the Greek translation of them, commonly known by the name of the Septuagint. Without entering at all into the details which have been given of this version, many of which must be considered as fabulous, it is sufficient at present to observe, that this translation was made in Egypt from the original Hebrew Scriptures by Alexandrian Jews. The date generally assigned to it lies between 280 and 290 years before Christ. Here, then, is a translation made of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language, which might then be considered as occupying the same influential position as the French or the English language does in the present day; and the date of this translation is about three centuries before Christ. What, then, are the books which it contains? It contains the same books which are to be found at this moment in the Old Testament. The Septuagint has indeed become associated with certain apocryphal books; but there

is every reason to believe that those were added some time after the Christian era. At all events, the Septuagint contains all the books which now form the Old Testament collection; and as to those additions that have been made, and most probably made since the Christian era, it may be stated that the two persons who were most competent to give evidence on this point, namely, Philo and Josephus, both well-known Jewish writers, never intimate that there was the slightest difference in their times as to the number of books contained in the Septuagint and the Hebrew Scriptures. Had there been any difference, doubtless notice would have been taken of this. Here then, by the testimony of Josephus already referred to, this important point is gained, viz. that it was his own belief, and that of his countrymen, that the Old Testament canon (just as it now exists) was completed about four centuries B.C.; and again the Septuagint, which contains all the books that are now in the Old Testament, is not only a confirmation of that testimony, but a striking proof of the genuineness and antiquity of the Old Hebrew Scriptures as at present in the hands of Jews and Christians.

Having thus ascertained somewhere about the time when the canon was completed, another question arises, who were the parties employed in this work? The Scriptures have furnished no direct information upon this subject; but when the statement of Josephus, as to the time when the succession of prophets terminated, is taken in connection with what is recorded in the book of Ezra, who lived about the time assigned by Josephus for the completion of the canon, there is a strong presumption in behalf of the national opinion of the Jews that Ezra, assisted by prophets, who were his contemporaries, began at least to arrange the sacred books of his nation into a set form, for the purpose of transmitting them to latest posterity. It was natural for such a patriot and reformer as Ezra to feel the deepest interest in these sacred books. It is very likely that the autograph laws of Moses which had been deposited by the side of the ark, and which had been unexpectedly found secreted in some recess

of the temple, to the great joy of the people, during the reign of good Josiah, were destroyed when the temple and all its furniture fell into the hands of the king of Babylon ; and this unfortunate event might naturally lead the patriotic Ezra and the prophets of his time, after the return from captivity, to take immediate steps for the permanent security of those copies of the Mosaic writings and of the prophets, which were still in existence, by a formal and public declaration as to what was divinely inspired and what was not. The succession of prophets ceased about the time of Ezra, and as the work of completing the canon could only be performed by divinely inspired men, it is very evident that if it was not done in his time, it could not be done at a period much later, for there was no competently qualified person to undertake such a work. The events detailed in Ezra and Nehemiah seem to favour such a supposition, whilst it is confirmed by the unanimous voice of Jewish testimony. The honour connected with the completion of such a work could have fallen upon no one more worthy of it in the age in which he lived, and the responsibility involved in such an undertaking could not have rested upon any one who would have discharged the solemn trust more faithfully than Ezra himself.

It can be very satisfactorily proved that the canon or collection of sacred books, once completed, could not be easily altered. It is very probable that, not long after the return from the Babylonish captivity, the Jews became divided into two important religious sects known by the names of Pharisees and Sadducees. On many points connected with the sacred oracles these two sects were opposed to one another. Their different views as to the interpretation of these were as wide from each other as the system of the loosest rationalist or the most rigid Calvinist. They were therefore involved in continual disputes. The one was jealous of the other, and it was impossible that any alteration could be made upon the Hebrew Scriptures by either of these rival sects without at once being detected and exposed. It is thus

that the God of providence overrules what may seem at first sight to be unmitigated evil for the production of permanent good. "He maketh even the wrath of man to praise Him." These same Old Testament Scriptures which were begun by Moses more than three thousand years ago, and completed about four hundred years before the advent of our Saviour, have been nearly two thousand years in the hands of rival sects, the Jew and the Christian, and not one passage in these records could be altered to favour the one party or the other without immediate detection and exposure. The Christian did not forge them; they were in existence long before the Founder of Christianity appeared. Both regard them as inspired records—the Christian, because he sees them fulfilled in the life and death of the Redeemer, and in the blessings connected with his spiritual kingdom—the Jew also believes them to be the oracles of God; and is his belief in these, and his rigid observance of their ordinances, even at the present hour, not a striking proof of the Divine origin of these writings, inasmuch as they are a historical condemnation of his nation, a living witness against them, and yet they are most firmly believed, and most fondly revered, by the very people whom they condemn? Surely they would not be the forgers of writings which load them with severest reprobation; and if they were not most thoroughly convinced of their Divine origin, they would at once throw them aside.

It is therefore evident, from the circumstances now referred to, that the Old Testament canon has come down to us unchanged since the days of Ezra, at least there could not have been any material alteration. This will appear still clearer from another consideration, which adds some weight to what has been already advanced as to the identity of the canon now with what it was long before the appearance of Christ. I refer to the ancient division of the Old Testament, into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms—or the hymns and the maxims for life. This division must have taken place at a very early period, for it is distinctly referred to several times in the prologue to the apocryphal book de-

nominated the Wisdom of Sirach. This prologue or preface was probably written about 130, and the book itself about 180 B.C. Allusions to the same threefold division are made by Philo, an Alexandrian Jew, born about the year 20 B.C. ; and Josephus has distinctly mentioned the *five* books of Moses, *thirteen* books of the prophets, and other *four*, "containing hymns to God, and rules for the life of men." The Saviour himself, in speaking of these ancient writings, refers to this division. On one occasion, after his resurrection, he said to his disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." This reference, and the other numerous allusions which the Saviour makes to the Scriptures, may surely be taken as very satisfactory evidence that he approved of the canon, as completed about four centuries before he appeared, and as it existed at the time of his ministry. The supposition of any alteration after that, when the rival sects amongst the Jews themselves, and the rise of Christianity, are taken into account, cannot be entertained. If the Saviour had cherished any doubt as to the perfect state of the Hebrew canon, He would never have urged the people so emphatically to search the Scriptures ; neither would He have referred to them so often in proof of what He did and of what He taught. There are very few books in the Old Testament which have not been referred to or quoted either by Christ or his apostles. A list, containing several hundred quotations from, and references to, the various books in the Old Testament, might very easily be constructed from the writings of the apostles and evangelists. What does this prove ? Not merely that these ancient writings existed in the days of the Saviour, but that they were the self-same writings which formed the completed canon of Old Testament Scripture, at least four hundred years before He appeared ; for the quotations are generally taken from the old Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, denominated the Septuagint, which was in existence nearly three hundred years

before the Christian era. Would the Saviour or his apostles, think you, have referred so frequently to Moses and the prophets, had they not been convinced of the genuineness and credibility of their writings? Surely the fraud would have been very easily detected. Could any writer in the present day make quotations from a book that had no existence but in the imagination of the writer himself? If this could not be done without detection, as little could such a dexterous feat be accomplished eighteen hundred years ago, when Christianity had to contend with so many enemies, who would very eagerly have exposed such a fraud. The empty vapouring, therefore, which you have doubtless often heard repeated in your factories and workshops, and on the platform of infidel discussions, that these books are but the invention of idle and pampered priests who lived during the dark ages, and that the Bible cannot by any means be regarded as a book of such hoary antiquity, is a species of ignorant declamation as presumptuous as it is absurd. The man who could affirm that Westminster Abbey was built at the commencement of the present century, would not after all make a more foolish statement than the man who, either in the factory, the workshop, in the hall of science, or in the small coterie of kindred spirits, would oracularly affirm, with a mock air of wisdom, and in the face of all historical evidence, that the Bible, after all, is not a *great deal older than John Milton's Paradise Lost, or John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress!* This is too ridiculous for refutation. I would send the man who could make such a statement to the Jews, and if he were not altogether wilfully blind, he could not fail to discover in the history of that singular people, scattered throughout the whole earth, a striking proof not only of the antiquity but of the Divine origin of these sacred records; and any man may as well affirm that York Minster or the Tower of London was built last week, as affirm that the Hebrew Scriptures are but of recent origin. The Jews have never called in question the antiquity of these sacred writings, although there is very much in them condemnatory of their

conduct as a nation, and which one would have supposed they would gladly have seen expunged. But it has not been so. The ancient records, whether speaking good or evil, have been most scrupulously preserved entire. Let any one, therefore, but candidly examine the predictions contained in them regarding this nation, and let him compare these with the present condition of this people, and he can scarcely fail to recognise the hoary antiquity and the Divine origin of these writings.

LECTURE V.

NEW TESTAMENT—ANTIQUITY AND GENUINENESS.

Christianity supported by historical evidence. New Testament—its writers—style—antiquity. References to Boswell's Life of Johnson—to Pilgrim's Progress. Antiquity of the New Testament—how confirmed. Illustration from Macaulay's History of England. Evidence gathered from the first four centuries. Numerous quotations from the New Testament in the writings of friends and foes during that period. Impossibility of forgery. Ancient translations and versions. Testimony of Sir Isaac Newton. The only alternative.

ON the supposition that there was not a single page of the New Testament in existence, and that many centuries had elapsed since both the Gospels and the Epistles had been destroyed, would there be any means of proving that such a person as Jesus Christ had ever lived upon our earth, or that any great religious movement had ever been identified with his name? It has sometimes been affirmed, that but for the Bible there would be no evidence whatever that such a person as Christ ever appeared in our world. And the question has sometimes been proposed, with an air of triumph, How can you prove that He ever existed or performed the wonders that are ascribed to Him? They who put such a question as this must have an answer altogether independent of Scripture statement; and such an answer can be furnished from sources altogether unconnected with the Bible. Suppose there never had been a single page of the New Testament in your possession, you could nevertheless prove some of the principal facts recorded there, just as you can prove that such men as Augustus Cæsar, Cicero, Mohammed, Oliver Crom-

well, Napoleon Bonaparte, once lived and exercised a mighty influence during their lives. Apart from the Bible altogether, the principal facts in the life of Christ are established by the same kind of historical evidence by which the facts in the life of any world-renowned personage are confirmed. Josephus, though a Jewish historian, has borne testimony to Christ and his followers. If it be said that his testimony is unsatisfactory and brief, it is certainly as much as, if not more than, could have been expected from a Jew. But the testimony of Tacitus is more complete. He lived during the first century, and he was considered one of the most enlightened and truthful of all the Roman historians. He has attested in the most explicit terms the existence of Jesus,—the reality of such a personage,—his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate,—the temporary check which this gave to the religion which he had founded,—its revival a short time after his death,—its progress over the land of Judea, and to Rome itself, the metropolis of the empire; and just as a Pagan historian might be expected to do, he characterises this new faith as a destructive superstition. And no less explicit is the testimony of Suetonius, another historian contemporary with Tacitus. Speaking of the spread of Christianity, he says, “There are many (Christians) of every age, and of both sexes; nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but smaller towns also, and the open country.” It is almost needless to add the testimony of the younger Pliny, who was consul of Pontus and Bithynia, in the reign of the Emperor Trajan, which began towards the close of the first century. The persecutions begun against the Christians were stopped when the consul solemnly declared to the emperor, that the followers of Christ were a meek and inoffensive sect—that their morals were pure and innocent,—that they were free from all crimes, and that they voluntarily bound themselves by the most solemn oaths to abstain from vice, and to relinquish every sinful pursuit. It is just as impossible to disprove the fact of the birth of Christ in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, as it is to

disprove the fact that such historical characters as Luther, Milton, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, or Augustus himself lived, did their work, and disappeared from the stage of time. There is the same kind of historical evidence for the existence of the one as for that of the other. But in respect of Christ, the evidence for his existence is far greater in degree than even for that of any of the Roman emperors. It is very evident that Christianity must have had a beginning about 1800 years ago. Who began it? The Jews could not of themselves. They were its worst enemies. The fishermen of Galilee could not. To suppose this would be to credit a greater miracle than Jesus ever wrought; or as Rousseau has said, to imagine Christianity to be an invention, and the invention of such men as the fishermen of Galilee, would be to make the inventors greater than the hero himself whom they describe. The same historical evidence which proves that such men as Homer, Demosthenes, and Cicero, once lived, confirms the fact, apart from the Bible altogether, that Jesus appeared in Judea about eighteen centuries ago,—performed many benevolent wonders,—taught the purest precepts,—was put to death for the doctrines which he taught,—rose from the dead,—and that his followers in an amazingly short space of time, spread throughout the whole of the Roman empire, which was then nearly co-extensive with the known world. Historical evidence in behalf of this can be produced, altogether apart from the New Testament. The whole history of the civilised world for the last eighteen centuries, has been so identified with that of Christianity, or at least embodiments of it (whether these have been an exhibition of real Christianity or not is another question), that you might as well try to expunge the last eighteen centuries from the history of the world altogether, as deny the world-fact of the origin of Christianity at the time assigned to it. Does not history bear testimony to the fact of the Crusades, and do not these again carry you back to the death and resurrection of Jesus? Let no one imagine that I for one moment suppose that the Crusades of the

middle ages were anything like an embodiment of the true Christian spirit. Far from it. But the reference now made to these as a matter of history, is simply to show that had the death of Christ at Jerusalem not been a world-received and established fact long before the dark ages had settled down upon Europe, these Crusades for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre would not have taken place at all. And how do you account for the Christian Sabbath, apart from the historical event which it commemorates? We did not make it,—we received it from our forefathers. They did not make it,—they received it from a previous generation, to whom it was handed down from still more remote times. How then did it originate? Not with the Jews. They celebrate the seventh day as they did three thousand years ago. Had Christ not lived and died, and especially had He not risen from the dead, it would have been impossible to set apart the first day of the week, associated with the name of one who never had any existence, or with an event that never took place.

Having thus endeavoured to show that the main facts connected with the life of Christ are established by historical evidence, apart from the writings of the New Testament, my object in the next place is to show that the antiquity and genuineness of these writings, viz., the Gospels and the Epistles, can be established by the same evidence by which the antiquity or genuineness of any other ancient writings are confirmed.

Who are the reputed authors of these books which comprise the New Testament? For the most part they were the immediate followers of Christ—his companions in his brief but beautiful ministry of love. They were with one or two exceptions, men of humble origin, and had consequently received but little or no education. At all events, with perhaps two exceptions, they had never enjoyed the advantage of attending the schools of grammarians, rhetoricians, and philosophers. They were Jews by birth, upbringing, and prejudice; and, as already stated, the greater part of them

belonged to the humbler walks of life. They lived in Judea—they were acquainted with its people, scenes, and customs. Such are the reputed writers of these books, that have been handed down to us from a remote antiquity. It is reasonable to suppose, that their writings will be in some way or another a confirmation of the circumstances to which reference has been made. The circumstances which environ a writer must always exercise a certain influence upon his thoughts and style. It may therefore be reasonably asked, is there any internal evidence in these writings, and more especially in the four Gospels, to justify the ascription of these books to such men as the evangelists? Is there anything in idiom or style to confirm the assertion, that these writers for the most part were reared amid the lowly scenes and occupations of humble life? This is an important preliminary inquiry, before you bring these writings to the test of historical evidence. Here is a book, then, which comes to you, claiming a very remote antiquity, narrating the life, and unfolding the doctrines of Christ, said to be written nearly eighteen centuries ago, at different times and places, by Jews who were the followers of Christ. Is there any internal evidence that this book was really written by such men?

First of all, then, let it be observed, that this book was originally written in Greek. But is not this fact at once contrary to the supposition that such men wrote it? It may be asked, "How could these books be written in Greek, when the writers of them are said to be Jews? If so, we would have expected that these books would have been written in Hebrew, like the Old Testament. Is not this an insuperable objection at once to the genuineness of these books?" No. How then stands the case? This very circumstance is one of the internal proofs of genuine authorship. Had the New Testament been written in the same language as the Old, this would have created suspicion of falsehood. Such a circumstance would have made the New Testament too old. And why? Because the pure Hebrew, in which Moses and the prophets wrote, had become a dead language,

just as Latin is at this moment, long before the apostles penned the books of the New Testament. And why had it become a dead language? Ask the Jew, and he will tell you, that the seventy years which his forefathers spent in Babylon as captives, broke the force and spoiled the purity of their noble language, by mingling it with a foreign dialect. After this it is generally admitted, that the pure Hebrew was greatly corrupted, and ceased to be spoken. At all events, it had ceased to be a spoken language long before the Saviour appeared. In addition to the corrupting influence which the captivity exercised upon the Hebrew language, there was another cause which would tend to complete the change which the seventy years' exile had begun. "When the Syrian captains, who had succeeded Alexander in the government of the neighbouring kingdoms, tyrannised over the Jews, the Syriac language forced its way among them, and at length superseded the Hebrew as a living tongue." Why then, it may be asked, were the Gospels and the Epistles not composed in the Syriac language, which the Jews had adopted, just as books now published in Italy are written in Italian, which has superseded Latin, the ancient language of that country? The answer is easy. The Syriac language was but limited in its range, when compared with the Greek. The New Testament was designed for universal use. And as the Greek at that time was something similar to what the French is now, a language with which a man might travel over a great portion of the earth, the writers of the New Testament very naturally made choice of the most popular language of the day as the medium for the transmission of their thoughts to all parts of the world.¹ But then, were the Jews acquainted with the Greek, so as to be able to read, speak, and write it? Most assuredly they were. They had a translation of their ancient Hebrew writings in Greek, called the Septuagint. But it could not be expected that the fishermen of Galilee, when Greek was not

¹ See Bennett's Lectures on Infidelity. "The Jews living witnesses to the truth of Divine revelation."

their native language, could write it with so much propriety and correctness as those who had never known any other. In short, as has been well observed, the apostles then wrote Greek as an Englishman would write French, or a Frenchman English. This brings us, then, to an important point for consideration. Does the Greek of the New Testament bear any marks of having been written by Jews, to whom that language was not their native tongue? It does. If, for example, an Englishman, not thoroughly acquainted with the German, write in that language, another Englishman, who knows something of German, will perceive at once the marks of a countryman; and a German who does not understand English, will discover that it is not the language of one who has been born and bred in his father-land. Such a test as this has been applied to the Greek of the New Testament. Let a Greek scholar, for example, on either side of the question, familiar with none but pure Greek, read the New Testament, and he will immediately pronounce it not the production of a native Greek. Then let a Jew who understands Greek read it, and he will tell you it must have been written by Jews—by men reared for the most part amid the homely scenes and occupations of humble life; in short, by men placed precisely in the position which the apostles are said to have occupied. This, then, is an internal proof of the genuineness of the books. “Their composition accords with the character and circumstances of the reputed authors. Had the language been classical, there would have been some ground of suspicion; and the style would have been produced as a proof that they were not the works of the apostles and evangelists. It was therefore wisely ordered, that the writers, although, as we believe, under Divine superintendence, were permitted to set down their thoughts in a style which was natural to them, and thus to furnish internal evidence that the works which bear their names are really their own.”¹ This, then, is one internal evidence, which the

¹ Dick's Lectures.

best scholars, whatever their religious opinions may be, will at once admit, and which goes far to establish the point, that the New Testament could only be written by men placed in circumstances similar to those of the reputed authors. It is clear, therefore, that they were Jews.

But how are you to know that the gospels, which bear respectively the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the epistles which have been ascribed to Peter and Paul, were really written by them, and written at such an early period as nearly 1800 years ago? It is very evident, from what has been already advanced, that Christianity had its origin about that time, and that churches were very early planted in all the chief cities of Asia Minor. Many of those churches were planted by the apostles, who had heard the Saviour's discourses, and who had witnessed the wonders of healing which He performed. As Christianity spread, and as the living voice of apostles could not always be heard, urging its pure precepts, and enforcing its peculiar doctrines, written documents became absolutely necessary, in order to preserve the leading facts in the life of Christ, and the doctrines which he taught. And it was necessary that those documents should emanate either from the apostles themselves, or from those who wrote under their direction, and who were equally well qualified to commit to writing the chief facts in the life of Christ. Such documents could not be forged without detection, for Christianity was reared upon facts which were open to the examination of all. These facts have been embodied in certain books, which have been denominated gospels, and these form the first four books of the New Testament.

Are these books as old as they are said to be? and were they written by the parties whose names they bear? To do anything like justice to such inquiries as these, and to traverse the wide field of evidence that can be produced upon this subject, would require much time and patient labour. All, therefore, that I can attempt to do on the present occasion, is to present you with a few links in that unbroken chain of evidence, which unites the first century with the

present, and connects the various books of the New Testament with the names of those who were eye-witnesses of the events which they describe.

It is not reasonable to suppose, that the early Christians could remain long without some written records, containing some account of the doings and sayings of Christ. The desire for such records would be all the more felt, as the lapse of time gradually removed the early Christians from the immediate age in which Jesus lived. This desire was not ungratified. If we naturally expect that the lives of great men shall be recorded, and recorded by those who had the best opportunity of doing so, then why should the greatest and the best life that was ever spent on earth, be suffered to pass into oblivion, or the facts connected with that life be subjected to the damaging influence of uncertain tradition? If Boswell has written the life of Johnson with so much of garrulous interest and detail, why should not the beloved disciple commit to writing the facts connected with the life of his great Master? Now the evidence by which the genuineness of Boswell's life of Johnson is confirmed, is precisely the same kind of evidence by which the antiquity and genuineness of the Gospels are established. The evidence in both cases is that of historical testimony. It may seem more difficult to establish, in this distant age, the genuineness of the New Testament; but the difficulty is more apparent than real. The chain of evidence required in the one case is doubtless longer, but not the less secure than in the other. No one doubts at this moment that Boswell wrote the life of Johnson—no one would ever dream of associating the name of another writer with that book. And why? Because the historical evidence to the contrary is complete. So long as that book lasts, there will never be any need for another life of the great moralist. If that book should be in existence eighteen centuries after this, how could its genuineness be proved? or, in other words, how could it be shown that Boswell wrote it? The concurrent testimony of all history, from the period in which that book was written, down to

the year 3652, if the name of Johnson shall then be known, would for ever identify the name of Boswell with that history. Nobody doubts it now. The slightest suspicion has never been expressed on this point. Nobody but Boswell could have written such a book. Every subsequent edition will be issued with his name attached to it, and in every quarter of the globe where it may be published. But suppose that in the year 3600, or about that time, this fact should be questioned, how could the genuineness of this book be established? By an appeal to historical evidence. If it could be shown, that in the century immediately preceding, the greatest historian had referred to this as an undoubted fact; and if, by a regular chain of evidence, one link after another, the same fact could be traced down through each preceding century, from the thirty-eighth to the eighteenth, and if it could be shown, that during all that time the concurrent testimony of history, with one or two exceptions, perhaps, was in favour of this fact, would it not be clearly established?

Or take another book—take the “Pilgrim’s Progress” for example. That book will doubtless be read as long as the English language is spoken. Yes! the book that was written by a tinker, when shall it cease to be known? No one doubts, in the present day, that John Bunyan wrote that book. But suppose that this fact should be called in question eighteen centuries after this, how could the immortal honour of the Bedford tinker be preserved unsullied? In the same way as in the former case—by an appeal to history. And if an unbroken chain of evidence could reach from that time down to the period when, in the golden age of English literature, England’s own poet-laureate was not ashamed to write the life of the immortal dreamer, would not the tongue be silenced that would blast his fair fame, and the hand paralysed that would tear the unfading laurels from his brow? Or suppose again, that one thousand years after this the fact that such a man as William Penn ever existed should be doubted—suppose that every thing that has been

written about him should at that time be set down as a myth and a fable, a mere traditionary legend, would not the recently-published History of Macaulay, if then in existence, abundantly prove the contrary of this?

Well, after the lapse of many centuries, the genuineness of the New Testament has been called in question. Some have affirmed that it cannot be so old as it is said to be; and that it was not written by those whose names are attached to it. These are serious charges;—how can they be refuted? By an appeal to history, as in the cases already supposed. Men of the greatest learning in all ages have been satisfied that the *Iliad* was written by Homer, the *Æneid* by Virgil, the works of Horace by that poet, and the orations of Cicero by the famous Roman orator of that name. The genuineness of the Homeric writings has been called in question, but against the objections stands the concurrent testimony of all ancient history. In such an investigation as this, you are conducted step after step till you reach the times of Alexander the Great, as he has been termed, about three centuries before Christ. And even at that early period you find that seven cities contended for the honour of giving Homer birth. That warrior carefully deposited the *Iliad* in one of the richest and most valuable caskets of Darius, observing, that the most perfect work of human genius ought to be preserved in a box the most valuable and precious in the world. From that point you are conducted several centuries farther back, till you must yield to the unanimous testimony of tradition, and believe, with the rest of the world, that the old blind man of Scios sung those immortal strains. If you are asked why you believe this? your reply is—The testimony of all antiquity confirms it.

Now the books of the New Testament have the same historical evidence in their favour, but in a much greater degree; inasmuch as they are far more important than the writings of Homer, or Horace, or Virgil. Let us glance then at the confirmation which history affords of the genuineness of the New Testament writings. All the books which

now form the New Testament canon must have been written and circulated during the first century. The life of the apostle John, who was spared longer than the rest of his brethren, extended to the close of the first century. He was thus the connecting link between the apostolic age and the one that followed. All the writings which comprise the New Testament must have been completed before his death. These writings were doubtless known, more or less, to the various churches, and more especially, the epistles must have been well known in the churches to which they were sent; and although these writings might not as yet be arranged and comprised in one volume, they were all doubtless in existence, and known, more or less, to the principal churches before the close of the first century.

There is evidence to prove that the writings of the New Testament were united at a very early period in a distinct volume. Tertullian, born about fifty years after the death of the apostle John, mentions the collection of the Gospels as the "evangelical instrument," and designates the whole volume by the popular name, the "New Testament," the first part of which he describes as the "Gospels," and the second part as the "Epistles." It is also very evident that the books of the New Testament were publicly read and expounded at a very early period in the assemblies of Christians. This is confirmed by statements in these writings themselves, and also by statements made by writers who lived during the first and second centuries. As, for example, the apostle says, in writing to the Thessalonians, "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." And in like manner, when writing to the Colossians, he says,—“When this epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” In addition to this internal evidence for the fact that the writings of the apostles were read at a very early period, you have the testimony of Justin Martyr, about forty years after the death

of the apostle John, to this effect:—"The memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets, are read according as the time allows, and when the reader has ended, the president makes a discourse exhorting to the imitation of so excellent things."¹ About the same time you have the testimony of Irenæus to the fact that "all the Scriptures, both prophecies and gospels, are open and clear, and may be heard of all."² Chrysostom, shortly after the middle of the fourth century, affirms that "the Gospels, when written, were not hid in a corner, or buried in obscurity, but made known to all the world, enemies as well as others, even as they are now." The testimony of Augustine, in the fourth century, corroborates this. "The epistles of Peter and Paul are daily recited to the people." "The genuineness and integrity of the same Scriptures may be relied on, which have been spread over all the world, and *which, from the time of their publication were in the highest esteem, and have been carefully kept in the churches.*"³

But even granting that *every church* did not possess a complete copy of the writings in the New Testament before the end of the second, or the middle of the third century—a circumstance which certainly is not to be wondered at, since at such a time there was neither printing-press nor paper, nor the same facility of intercourse which we enjoy—this would not disprove the existence of a completed canon of apostolic writing long before that time. The materials were in existence, though some churches might not enjoy them on account of the circumstances to which I have referred, at the same time and to the same extent with others. But to affirm that they were not in existence at all till the end of the third century is manifestly false. An author, for example, may have contributed many valuable papers to various periodicals. Those papers may never have been arranged into a separate volume till after his death, or till the very close of his life; but it would surely be a manifest falsehood

¹ Lardner, i. 345.² Ibid. i. 372.³ Ibid. ii. 593, 594.

to assert that the writings had no existence till they appeared in a separate form, and were embodied in one or more volumes. Suppose those papers to have been scattered through various periodicals for a century or more, and were latterly collected into a separate form, it would be manifestly false to say, that they only then began to exist after they had existed for a hundred years, but scattered through the pages of periodicals that were well known and highly esteemed. And it is no less absurd and false to affirm, that the writings of the New Testament had no existence previous to the middle or the close of the third century, simply because the completed canon, as it now exists, may not have been universally acknowledged before that time. Whatever may be the date assigned to the completion of the canon; that is, when all the books which are now embodied in the New Testament were arranged into a separate collection, not by the arbitrary dicta of any church or council, but by the force of the united testimony of all the faithful who had the best means of judging between the spurious and the true—it is very clear, from internal evidence that may be gathered from the New Testament itself, and from other historical sources, that these writings were in existence long before this collection was acknowledged as of Divine authority by the great body of the faithful throughout the world.

Here let us pause to inquire whether or not the writings of the apostles have been quoted or commented upon in the writings of distinguished men who lived at the same time, or shortly after, or in the third or fourth centuries.

In Macaulay's History of England there are frequent allusions to previously existing histories, and to former historians. Nobody, therefore, who shall read that history five centuries after this, can have any reason to doubt that those historical documents and historians existed before Macaulay wrote his present history. If, therefore, you can find any writers in the second century referring in their writings to the books of the New Testament, you may just as reasonably conclude, that these books, at all events, were in existence

before those references were made. It would certainly be unreasonable to suppose, that the writers of the second or the third century would refer to books that had no existence at all. Such an imposition as this could easily have been detected, and would, doubtless, have been exposed. After all the apostles were removed by death from their varied spheres of labour and suffering, they were succeeded by a few eminent men, who had been the companions and the scholars of the apostles themselves. Those men have generally received the name of apostolic fathers, because they were the immediate successors of the apostles. They were five in number—Barnabas, Ignatius, Clement, Polycarp, and Hermas. In the fragments of their writings which have survived the lapse of time, there are several quotations made from the Gospels, and from the Acts of the Apostles. The work of searching the writings of the apostolic and post-apostolic Fathers is one upon which many valuable lives have been spent. If, then, after the most laborious and profound research, the learned on both sides of the question have met with passages in the writings of those venerable men, which are manifestly quotations from the books of the New Testament, what other conclusion can you come to than this, that these books existed previous to the time in which those Fathers wrote?

Advancing on towards the middle and close of the second century, you meet with another advance guard, another outpost of defence, stretching onward through the centuries "like so many forts in a country that is the seat of war." As you advance, the evidence becomes clearer, inasmuch as, during the lapse of years, the different writings of the apostles became better known; for you must ever bear in mind that the early churches were not blessed with the invention of printing, nor the facility of intercourse which you enjoy. Justin, who is commonly called Martyr, because he suffered death for Christ about the middle of the second century, has many quotations from the Gospels. There have been collected out of his works from thirty to forty passages from the

Gospel of Matthew, and several from the other evangelists. Towards the close of the same century you meet with Irenæus, and in his writings there are between two and three hundred passages quoted from the Gospel of Matthew. He has referred to this gospel by name. He durst not do this unless it had existed for a considerable period before he wrote. He has made more than one hundred quotations from the Gospel of Luke, and above one hundred and twenty from the Gospel of John; and he very often refers to the Acts. He has not only ascribed the four Gospels and the Acts to their respective authors, but has acknowledged nearly all the books which are at present found in the New Testament.¹ As you advance from one post to another, the defences of the Christian faith become all the stronger. You follow an uninterrupted series of testimonies to the genuineness and antiquity of the New Testament Scriptures. Before the close of the second century you meet with Tertullian, of whose writings a profound scholar has observed, "That there are perhaps more and longer quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author than of all the works of Cicero, though of so uncommon excellence for thought and style, in the writers of all characters for several ages." It would be endless to allude to all the testimonies that might be brought forward from the first three or four centuries, in behalf of the genuineness of the New Testament; but I must not omit the name of Origen, a man of prodigious learning, profound research, and brilliant imagination. With his name you commence the third century. He is one of the most distinguished of the early Christian writers. Quotations from Scripture are "thickly sown in the works of this writer." The following Table, which I have copied from Keith's "Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity," will show you how very frequently he has either quoted from, or referred to, the various books of the New Testament:—

¹ Jones on the Canonical Authority of the New Testament, 3d Vol.; and Alexander on the Canon of Scripture.

*Quotations from the New Testament in the extant
works of Origen, A.D. 230.*

	VOL. I.	VOL. II.	VOL. III.	VOL. IV.
Matthew,	152	206	735	259
Mark,	15	18	94	68
Luke,	74	102	308	165
John,	118	132	175	350
Acts,	21	32	50	44
Romans,	89	98	111	433
1 Corinthians,	120	169	161	170
2 Corinthians,	50	58	51	79
Galatians,	30	41	32	47
Ephesians,	29	28	39	39
Philippians,	9	23	13	23
Colossians,	18	22	24	27
1 Thessalonians,	7	13	18	10
2 Thessalonians,	7	3	10	6
1 Timothy,	15	21	30	26
2 Timothy,	9	20	10	16
Titus,	3	3	7	5
Philemon,	0	0	3	0
Hebrews,	26	51	40	37
James,	1	11	2	6
1 Peter,	9	12	17	12
2 Peter,	2	2	0	1
1 John,	13	24	13	27
Jude,	3	0	2	1
Revelation,	3	6	25	26
	823	1095	1970	1877

In short, it is by no means an exaggeration when it is affirmed, that if all the passages quoted from the New Testament, during the first four centuries, by the various Christian writers, were extracted from their works, those passages would be found to comprise nearly the whole of what has been written by the apostles and evangelists, and which they have left as "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path."

But it may be said, the argument as yet has been wholly on the side of those who were friends. To take another

view of the question, then, it may be stated that there were four professed opponents of Christianity during the first four centuries. One of these was no less a personage than the emperor Julian. Celsus was perhaps the most virulent and distinguished of the four. "The testimony of Celsus is peculiarly valuable, because it is disinterested." The same may be said of the other three, Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian. And yet, although Celsus lived very near the time when the books contained in the New Testament were written, and the astounding events recorded in them took place, he not only bore testimony to the fact that these writings were in existence in his day, but he never attempted to question the genuineness of these documents, or to throw suspicion upon the alleged fact that they were really written by the parties whose names they bear. He did not even attempt to deny that the miracles were performed, but he attributed the performance of them to magic. "The single testimony of Celsus may be considered as decisive of the fact that the story of Jesus and of his life was actually written by his disciples—this is a fact which he never thinks of disputing. He takes it up upon the strength of its general notoriety; and the whole history of that period furnishes nothing that can attach any doubt or suspicion to this circumstance."¹ Nobody, for example, would think in these days to call in question the fact that Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, that John Bunyan was the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or that Boswell wrote the *Life of Johnson*. And why? Because everybody, on the best evidence, believes the contrary; and it seems to have been as much the popular belief in the days of Celsus, that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were the authors of the respective gospels that bear their names, and that Paul was the author of the various epistles identified with his name, as it is at this moment the popular belief that Milton wrote that sublime poem, and that Bunyan was the author of that immortal dream. The popular belief was

¹ Chalmers.

doubtless as strong in the one case as in the other; had it been otherwise, attempts would have been made to impugn the genuineness of the New Testament writings. Could it have possibly been shown that they were forgeries, would not every opportunity have been gladly embraced for doing so? The Jews and the heathens of that time were doubtless vigilant, and not only so, but they were actuated by positive hostility; and nothing could have been more pleasing to many of them, than that it could have been shown that these writings were neither genuine nor credible; in other words, that they were neither written by the parties to whom they were ascribed, nor contained what was true. The imposture of the unfortunate Chatterton was speedily detected and exposed, but the lapse of ages only tends to confirm more and more the genuineness of these ancient records.

After such a hurried survey as this, the eye may rest with complacency upon this point as established; viz., that, from the close of the first to the middle of the sixth century, both Christian and heathen writers very frequently referred to the New Testament as a book that was well known and widely spread. They quoted in many instances at great length the very passages as they are now read, and ascribed the various books to the very authors with whose names they are still associated. Surely there is nothing in the way of literary or historical evidence in behalf of the antiquity and genuineness of any book equal to this. It is the evidence which men distinguished for the profoundest learning and the most patient research, after the labours of a lifetime, have most satisfactorily established, and from sources alike open to all the learned, whatever their opinions may be, in every part of the world. It may be said that those sources are *only open to the learned*; but surely the evidence, as I have endeavoured to explain it, may be *appreciated by all*.

But there is still another consideration which ought to be advanced in connection with such a subject as this. For example, on turning to the third and fourth centuries, you will find in the writings of celebrated men of that period,

from the time of Origen, onwards to the close of the fourth century, no fewer than *thirteen catalogues* of the books contained in the New Testament. What is the value of such documents? In the first place, they establish the genuineness of the different books, for in those thirteen catalogues all the books referred to are associated *with the same names as they are at present*. And, in the second place, those catalogues, taken in connection with the quotations from the New Testament, which are to be found in the writings of the various authors who framed those lists, furnish very satisfactory evidence, that the books from which they quoted have been transmitted to us substantially the same as they were in the days of the apostles. Those ancient catalogues are therefore valuable in this respect, that they go far to prove the genuineness of the New Testament, inasmuch as they must have represented, at the time they were drawn up, the belief of the various churches in regard to the authorship of the various books which form the canon of the New Testament.

Three or four of those catalogues out of the thirteen have indeed expressed some doubt as to two or three books, but this is just what might have been expected at that early period, when there was so little facility of intercourse compared with what is at present, and when the work of the press, that great right arm of liberty and knowledge, was done by the pen; and when, consequently, some of the writers, who framed those ancient lists of the sacred books, must have been placed in better circumstances for judging accurately of their genuineness, than others who have also left catalogues of the books in the New Testament. The very hesitation that has been expressed as to one or two epistles, is a proof that no book was recklessly admitted into the canon, and that great care was taken to separate the true from the false. Nothing in the whole annals of history can be more certain than this, that the collection of those books that were considered the inspired and the authoritative writings of the apostles and evangelists, to the exclusion of all others of an apocryphal character, was not made without

great care, and the most rigid scrutiny both of external and internal evidence.

I cannot conclude this lecture, without referring, however briefly, to another fact, viz., that at a very early period, translations of the New Testament were made into various languages, and those versions reach as far back as the early part of the second century. Amongst those versions, the old Syriac, called the *Peshito*, holds a prominent place, and is considered to have been made before the close of the first century. When the version which we possess came to be compared with the old translation of the New Testament in Syriac, the text of the one was all but an exact version of the text of the other. I might direct your attention to many other versions, and conduct you through all the centuries, from the first on to the days of our immortal Wycliffe, who first translated the entire Bible into English about the close of the fourteenth century ; but enough has been already advanced to convince any candid inquirer, that whatever may be the contents of the New Testament, the various pieces of which it is composed were at least produced before the close of the first century, and were written by the persons whose names they bear. Sir Isaac Newton, one of the profoundest intellects that ever graced the annals of scientific research in this or in any other country, and who, whilst “carrying the torch of science to the utmost boundaries of the universe,” was not ashamed to bow before the simple majesty of Divine truth, has justly observed,—“*I find more sure marks of authenticity in the New Testament than in any profane history whatever.*”

There is thus an unbroken chain of evidence in behalf of the genuineness of the New Testament, stretching from the days of the apostles to the present moment, every link in which is a convincing proof that the God of the Bible has watched over it, and that His word cannot fail. Surely, if any ancient book in the world has been attested to be genuine by incontrovertible evidence, that book is the Bible. It was, therefore, either from utter ignorance, or from a desire to falsify

that Paine unfortunately penned the following sentence:—
“Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ; but the fact is historically otherwise. *There was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.*” On the contrary, the books of the New Testament can be traced back to the first century with as much clearness and accuracy of historical detail, as the writings of Spencer can be traced to the middle of the sixteenth century. The early opponents of Christianity, to whom reference has already been made, refute, and that in the most satisfactory manner, the statement of Paine. Celsus flourished about seventy-six years after the apostle John. In what remains of his work against Christianity, there are no fewer than eighty quotations from, or references to, the books of the New Testament. The fact is, Celsus was better acquainted with the writings of the apostles than ever Paine seems to have been, and yet this modern oracle of infidelity in many a factory and workshop, has the effrontery to tell us, that the New Testament had no existence till the fourth century! If so, then his prototypes, Celsus of the second century, and Porphyry of the third, must have quoted from a book that had no existence at all! “The True Word” of Celsus (the title of the book which he wrote in the second century against Christianity), is a complete refutation of many parts of the “Age of Reason,” and a most convincing proof even from the writings of an enemy, of the antiquity and genuineness of the various books of the New Testament. I need not dwell upon this; but bear with me for one sentence more. Paine states, that the New Testament had no existence till the fourth century; and yet, strange to say, that his kindred spirits, Celsus, A.D. 176; Porphyry, A.D. 270; Hierocles, A.D. 303; and Julian, A.D. 361, have copiously referred, in their respective writings, to the New Testament as a well known book!

The man who could make such a statement in reference to

the New Testament, not to speak of the gross immoralities which stained his life, cannot be trusted in matters of religion. The Old Book yet! Yes! the precious truths of the Bible, hoary with antiquity, indisputably genuine, irrefragably true, and fraught with endless blessings, ten thousand times rather than the "Age of Reason." Why should the two be named in the same breath? Rather let me stand with firm footing upon the sure foundation of eternal truth, than flounder, and sink, and perish, amid—

"Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,
Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things
Abominable, unutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,
Gorgons, and hydras, and chimæras dire."

LECTURE VI.

THE DIVINE ORACLE ITS OWN WITNESS.

1. Original and sublime conceptions of the Bible ; various illustrations of this. 2. Morality of the Bible. 3. All-pervading spirituality. 4. Light which the Bible has thrown around the being and destiny of man. 5. Inlaid with the name and the glory of the Saviour from beginning to end.

PASSING from the somewhat dry details of the last two lectures, which have been occupied more with the external history than the internal beauty of the Bible, let me now invite you, convinced, as you must surely be, of its wondrous antiquity, to pass from the threshold into the glorious interior of the temple itself.

The task which now lies before me is a pleasant one. For after all, the best evidence for the truth of the Bible is the Bible itself. But in the lectures which follow, I do not for one moment pretend to give you anything like a systematic view of the evidences of Christianity. I have spoken of Divine truth as a temple ; I have invited you all to enter ; and I shall be more than glad, if, in the few lectures which follow, I succeed in pointing out to you here and there some of the features of that celestial beauty and power which breathe and move throughout this noble structure, and give Divine life, symmetry, and attraction to the whole. In short, my aim is to deepen your interest in the truth of God, to awaken your sympathies in its high and holy teachings ; and with this end in view, I now present you with a few of its more prominent characteristics.

1. The *original* and *sublime conceptions* of the Bible are such as that they cannot be accounted for on any other supposition than that its writers were Divinely inspired. Originality consists in the discovery of new truths in any department of human inquiry, or in the recasting of old truths into new and more attractive forms, so that they become invested with new power, adaptation, and beauty. The fire of genius has kindled them anew, and they flash out upon the darkness of the world like the glorious march of new stars from the darkness and the silence of the infinite into the light and beauty of kindred worlds. The Bible is pre-eminently distinguished for its original and sublime conceptions, not merely because in some parts it contains the oldest writings in the world, but because it is a Divine revelation of great and glorious truths which the unaided reason of man could never have discovered, nor the highest flights of his genius ever reached. The pure and the spiritual conceptions, for example, which the Bible has furnished of the Deity, were such as had never entered into the mind of the wisest heathen philosophers.

Where will you find in all the ancient philosophy of Egypt, Greece, or Rome, any thing approaching the sublime conceptions of the Supreme Being, and the sovereignty of his administration, as are to be found in the 90th Psalm. Now, let it be borne in mind, that this sacred ode was written at a period when the torch of profane history was not yet kindled, and when all the nations of the earth were the votaries of idolatrous systems more or less impure. How can you account for the fact that Moses, though reared in the midst of an idolatrous court, acquired and communicated such knowledge of the Supreme Being, whilst the wisest philosophers, even centuries after this, were but groping their way in darkness deep as midnight? How was the harp of Moses instinct with life and heavenly rapture upon such a sublime theme as this, whilst the harp of Hesiod, and Homer, and Virgil was dumb? The banks of the Red Sea and the pathless desert were oft-times vocal with the song of praise,

that rose from the heart of an emancipated nation to the eternal, self-existent, holy, wise, and good, all-powerful, all-pervading Supreme Intelligence; whilst the philosophers of Egypt were not ashamed to prostrate themselves before crocodiles, or cats, or snakes, which they had elevated as gods, in the shrines of their gorgeous temples. How did it happen that Moses had any more exalted conceptions of the Deity than they? There is no satisfactory answer to this but that he was divinely inspired.

The Bible conceptions of God, as a whole, were not within the grasp of man's intellect, or the range of his sympathies, degraded as he was by idolatry; and it was altogether impossible that he could invest the Deity with attributes of which he knew nothing himself, and which, when presented to him as the essential attributes of a perfect God, he could not love; seeing that he had been so long accustomed to associate all the impurities of his own nature with the gods that he adored. He had no idea of holiness: it is very clear, therefore, that this Bible attribute of God, so foreign to the heathen mythology, could not emanate from man. He had not the pure conception within himself; it must therefore have come from without—it was not in the earth, it must therefore have come from above. Had there been no Bible, how very different would have been our conceptions of the Supreme Being! In proof of this you have only to look at heathen countries, where the light of revelation has never dawned; and where, from the subtle philosophy of the Brahmin down to the brutish notions of the Hottentot, will you find any thing approaching the sublime conceptions which the Bible has unfolded of the nature and perfections of Jehovah? God is love—God is light—God is a spirit—are brief scriptural affirmations regarding the nature of the Supreme, which you look for in vain in all the records of ancient philosophy.

And what a sublime conception is the life of Christ! The evangelists could not possibly have invented such a life from any previously existing model, or from elements of character

such as those that constituted the moral loveliness of the Saviour. Such altogether is the originality connected with the life of Christ, his extraordinary dignity combined with humility, the meekness and purity of his manners—his vast intellectual superiority, united with all the innocent simplicity of a child—the affecting goodness of his instructions, the excellence of his doctrines, the sublimity of those Divine truths which he revealed, the comprehensiveness of his maxims, the spirituality of his precepts, the open sincerity of his whole life—his patience, his magnanimity under the most grievous wrongs and the severest sufferings—his complete mastery over all the passions of our nature—his tenderness, on the one hand, in dealing with the multiform sorrows of man, and his stern, unbending moral heroism, on the other, in combating every form of hollow-hearted hypocrisy, formality, selfishness, and pride—his complete disinterestedness—his entire devotedness to every thing connected with the weal of our race—his intense love of nature, and his intenser love of man—his untiring benevolence, “he went about continually doing good”—his dignified consistency and perfect command of himself in the most trying situations—his thorough transparency of character—his all-pervading honesty of purpose—his simplicity without affectation, his uniform dignity without pompous ostentation and haughty reserve—his frank and fearless bearing—his entire freedom from the strut or stare of imposing trick or stratagem—and, in short his all-absorbing work of mercy for the good of man and the glory of God—that the world had never realised such a life, it had never witnessed the embodiment of such virtues, nor had it ever hoped to witness at any period such a magnificent assemblage of virtues in the person of any human being. Such a life and such a character have stamped a striking and a permanent originality upon the pages of the Bible.

The views which this book has given of Divine providence, either in its more particular or general aspects, stooping to the most minute or comprehending the widest range of being—the remedial scheme of mercy in its origin, gradual de-

velopment, and final completion,—the godlike idea of a universal kingdom embracing every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, a spiritual community gathered out of the world lying in wickedness, made partakers of a Divine life, heirs of glory, and gradually meetened by the moral discipline of earth for the immortal blessedness of heaven, the central glory of the universe, the vast assembling place of all the good and the great, the seminary where Jesus himself shall be the teacher, and the temple where God himself shall be its everlasting light, are surely original and sublime conceptions which had never come within the range of ancient poetry or philosophy—mental creations which far transcended the reason of man, and in the survey of which you traverse a mighty range of thought, extending from God through all the shining ranks of angels to man saved and man lost, from heaven to earth and from earth to hell, from angels of light to angels of darkness, from the church triumphant in heaven to the church struggling upon earth, from the day on which “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” at the birth of a new world, till the same sweet melody of heaven fell upon the ear of midnight on the plains of Bethlehem, and angel spirits descending from the realms of light, heralded the birth of man’s greatest friend—from Bethlehem to Calvary, and from the cross on to the consummation of all things, when the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with the glory of his Father and of the holy angels—to awaken his people from the sleep of death, to abolish the reign of this last enemy, to banish evil for ever from our world, to acquit his people, condemn the wicked, vindicate the ways of God, and introduce that glorious era when there shall be “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” For original and sublime conceptions such as these we are entirely indebted to the Bible. Had there been no such book, the human mind could never have risen to the lofty range of such sublime thoughts as these. The mind of Socrates and Plato, the rapt spirit of Homer and of Virgil never

aspired to such a sublime region of thought as this. Their eyes beheld not this "exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—their ears heard not the melody of the blessed, neither did it enter into their hearts to conceive of such glorious truths. How, then, could Moses, the Arab shepherd, or Elisha at the plough, or the herdsman of Tekoa, or Peter, and James, and John, the fishermen of Galilee, draw aside the veil which concealed these glories from the greatest intellects that shed the lustre of their profound research over the darkness of ancient heathenism? How were these glories concealed from the wise and the prudent, and revealed unto babes? How does it happen that Moses and the rest of the prophets, and the fishermen of Galilee, have filled the pages of the Bible with such sublime and original conceptions, compared with which the writings of the wisest ancient philosophers are but the feeble struggles of the mole upwards through the darkness of his subterraneous retreat to the light of day, compared with the bold flight of the eagle as he soars aloft, and gazes unwaveringly upon the face of the sun? How can you account for this difference between the sacred writers and all others, but on the ground that they were divinely inspired to reveal what the eye and the ear of man had neither seen nor heard, and that they spake as "they were moved by the Holy Ghost"?

2. The *morality of the Bible* is another convincing proof that it came from God. It is very evident from the corrupt and degrading notions which the ancient heathens entertained of the supernatural and the Divine, that their standard of morality could not be very high. The gods themselves were represented as the patrons of vice. If such were the deities, what could the worshippers be? The dark details of the first chapter of the Romans are but too true a picture of the worshippers and the worshipped. The standard of morality for the multitude could not rise higher than that which regulated the gods themselves, and that in the most of cases could not be called by the term morality at all. Polytheism

had not one deity to present to the mind of man that could be regarded as an embodiment of purity and moral worth, and fitted to exalt, and purify, and ennoble the minds of her votaries—to arouse and call forth all the better feelings of our nature for higher attainment in everything good, and beautiful, and true—to excite to arduous self-discipline, or draw out the spiritual energies of man towards a high moral destiny and a fairer world. How different from the morality of the Bible! Where, amid all the annals of ancient Polytheism, or history, or philosophy, will you find a life like that of Jesus, or an embodiment of every virtue such as he exhibited in his career of suffering, mercy, heroism, and highest moral triumph? What ancient philosopher will bear, for one moment, a comparison with him, and what morality will bear to be compared with that which he propounded? How could the sacred writers of themselves unfold such a pure system of morality? They could not borrow their precepts from any existing code of morals. They may have found a sparkling gem here and there of moral truth in searching among the rubbish of five hundred years. But what were all those glowworm lights, gleaming amid the darkness of ancient philosophy, compared with the pure light of the Gospel “that lured to brighter worlds, and led the way”? I cannot see how it was within the range of possibility that the sacred writers, stretching from Moses in the desert to John in Patmos, a period of nearly 1600 years, “like a chain of heralds stationed over a wide extent of country, for the purpose of transmitting some great and urgent tidings,” could have formed either the morality of the Old, or the more elevated and spiritual system of the New Testament era. The world during the whole of that time had been altogether unable to redeem itself from the curse and the bondage of idol worship, or to form anything approaching a perfect standard of moral rectitude. As time elapsed, the world was only becoming worse. Select the purest and the wisest philosopher of that long period from the halls of Egypt or the schools of Greece or of Rome, and there is not one that will bear a comparison

in point of moral worth and purity of life with the fishermen of Galilee, or with the obscurest and humblest Christian mechanic of the present day, "who lives in all godliness and honesty."

Did the morality of Moses come from Egypt, celebrated for its wisdom and its learning? Impossible. Did the morality of Moses originate with himself? To believe this would certainly involve a greater stretch of credulity than to believe what is the only reasonable conclusion, that it came from God.

Did the morality of the New Testament come from Rome? Impossible. The imperial city was, at the time when the New Testament was written, a very sink of corruption. Did the fishermen of Galilee originate amongst themselves a system of morality, so pure, comprehensive, and sublime? To believe this, would be to credit a greater miracle than any that is recorded in the whole range of Scripture narrative. To believe that the morality of the New Testament was the creation of man's unaided reason, is certainly a greater stretch of credulity than to believe that the holy spiritual system recorded there came from God. Rousseau himself was constrained to acknowledge, "The majesty of Scripture strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero."¹

3. Another characteristic of the Bible is *its all-pervading spirituality*. Everything in nature or in history, in the past,

¹ Rousseau's Thoughts.

the present, and the future, is looked at in relation to God. This spiritual element pervades the whole Bible. In its descriptions of natural scenery, in its historical records, in its moral precepts, in its enforcements of truth and obligation, in all its delineations of the spirit-world, or the material creation, *God is everywhere*. Everything is spoken of in connection with the great God. You cannot read the Bible, therefore, without being brought, either through the medium of nature or history, into immediate contact with the Father of spirits and the God of all flesh. Does the Bible speak of the starry firmament, it is on this wise—"The heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament showeth forth thy handiwork." Does it speak of the ocean? God is also here. "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap; He layeth up the deep in store-houses." Does it speak of the earth with its varied features of loveliness? God is also here; and the mind of the Bible reader is spiritualised, as he contemplates the external aspects of nature either in the forms of bland and placid beauty, or in rugged and towering grandeur. God speaks in the thunder—"The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; shaketh the wilderness; divideth the flames of fire." He is in the whirlwind and the storm—"He breaketh the ships of Tarshish with an east wind;" He is in the gentle, genial breath of the south, when in spring He "renews the face of the earth." He is in the rippling stream which "runs among the hills, that the beasts of the field may drink, and the wild asses quench their thirst;" and He is seen and felt in the great and wide sea, "wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts." No descriptions of nature, no pastoral poems may be compared in point of richness and beauty to those of the Bible. In spring He maketh the earth "soft with showers;" in summer "the little hills rejoice on every side;"—"the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered with corn;"—in autumn "He crowneth the year with his goodness, his path drops fatness, and all nature, the hills and the valleys, shout for joy, they also sing:" in winter He

giveth snow like wool ; He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes ; He casteth forth his ice like morsels." The sacred writers thus look at nature, and all her phenomena, through a spiritual medium. They trace every change, every appearance, not merely to secondary causes, but to God himself. And so is it with the view which they take of history. Every event is looked upon as under the control of Him "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working ;" who ruleth in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of earth ; who bringeth this event to one, and that event to another ; who setteth the day of adversity over against the day of prosperity ; who speaketh and it is done, who commandeth and it stands fast. To the eye of every sacred writer all nature and all history are full of God. The Hebrew bard could not look upon a rock, but immediately it became the symbol of Jehovah's strength ; the strong tower, the mountains round about Jerusalem, the buckler and the shield, suggested in like manner the idea of Divine defence ; and thus appropriate objects in nature and in art were invested with new meanings and attractions from the spirit-world. Material forms became the symbols of the spiritual ; and thus the whole Bible, from beginning to end, connects the reader with God, and keeps him ever in his presence, so that the spirit of man, through this all-pervading spirituality of the Bible, is chastened, subdued, and yet elevated into a sublimer region of thought, into a purer atmosphere, which must indeed be ever irksome and oppressive to the carnal mind, but opening up to the spiritually minded an ever enlarging field of holy action, happiness, and peace. You cannot open and read the Bible, even when you are most of the "earth, earthy," without feeling this spiritual influence, and the overshadowing presence of that God who has given to its every page a hallowing power, so that none, even the most careless or unbelieving, can close the book and depart without some sweet feeling that surely "God was in yonder place."

What is it that dignifies man in the estimation of the

Bible? Not the mere adventitious circumstances of earth, such as ancestral greatness, noble parentage, blood, high birth, wealth, rank, renown, and grandeur. No! The Bible looks at man in the light of eternity, and all these distinctions fade away in the presence of those solemn conceptions which it has formed of man's immortality, of his fallen and spiritually wretched condition, and therefore it surrounds him with the solemn realities connected with his own fallen and immortal nature—with the spirit-world of "things unseen and eternal," and thus, whatever man may be, the Bible is ever spiritual in its teaching, and holy and heavenly in its aims. How does it happen that there is an entire absence of such spirituality as this in the writings of ancient moralists, and yet you cannot read a single passage from the short writings of those old fishermen of Galilee, but which confronts you with the solemn realities of eternity, and brings you into immediate contact with the Father of Spirits and the God of all flesh? Such spirituality on the part of the sacred writers could only have been produced by the Eternal Spirit who brings light out of darkness, and who makes all things new.

4. *The light which the Bible has thrown around the being and destiny of man* gives it a pre-eminent distinction amongst all other books. It has clearly revealed what man is, and what he is not—what he should be, and what he ought not to be; and what, according as he takes the one course or the other, he will inevitably become. The Bible, and the Bible alone, has solved the great problem of life. It alone has revealed the great end of being. It alone has furnished the true answer to the inquiries—What? where? how?—What is happiness? Where is it to be found? How is it to be attained? It explains the past, it blesses the present, it brightens the future. It has opened the portals of immortality—its glorious sunshine has dispelled the darkness of the grave. The night of Egyptian darkness which ancient philosophy could not dispel, has been gemmed by the radiant

stars of eternal truth. The appalling gulf of evil has been spanned by the bow of promise, stretching from Eden to Bethlehem,—the great arch of God's love which brightens the darkest storm of life, in the midst of which the voice of the Divine Saviour is heard—"Peace, be still."

Many are the voices of the night, and many are the feeble lights that flicker in the gloom, but the Bible alone is the light which, in the meantime, reaches far enough beneath, above, and around, to reveal the destiny of man, till its own light gleaming now athwart the dark profound, shall be absorbed and swallowed up by the more glorious light of the perfect day. But O! surely it was not within the power of man to evoke such a light as this from the midst of darkness. He who can believe this, affirms at once his belief in a greater act of power than the creation of the sun itself.

"Whence came I? Memory cannot say.

What am I? Knowledge will not show.

Bound whither? Ah! away—away

Far as eternity can go.

Thy love to win, thy wrath to flee.

O God, thyself, my teacher be!"

5. The Bible is *inlaid with the name and the glory of the Saviour from beginning to end.*

No sooner did the dark night of sin settle down upon our earth, than Christ Jesus arose the bright and the morning star. His name is embalmed with early promise, precept, prophecy, and prayer. He was the burden of prophetic song, the glory of prophetic vision. The fragrance of Sharon's rose was felt before the bowers of Eden were lost. The Plant of Renown survived both the Fall and the Flood, and grew up another tree of life, not in the midst of the garden, but in the midst of sin and sorrow, for the healing of the nations. Its roots stretch everywhere into the history and poetry, into the promises, precepts, and predictions of the Bible. This is the tree of the Lord's planting, and beneath its grateful shade the aged historian wrote his imperishable record, and the rapt seer struck his harp, and sung his song

of prophetic rapture, becoming more and more impassioned, as glorious visions rose before him, in which were depicted, as with a sunbeam, the glories of that Saviour who is at once the central tree in the garden of promise and prophecy, and the central luminary in the great system of truth, stretching from Eden to Calvary, and from Calvary till the end of time, and from that onward through all the revolving cycles of eternity. The beautiful mosaic work of Bible narrative, promise, and prophecy, is thus inlaid with the name and the glory of Christ. You find him everywhere, from the first promise in Paradise to the last prediction in Patmos. Abraham saw his day afar off, and was glad. He was the Shiloh of Jacob, the Prophet of Moses, the Star of Balaam, the Redeemer of Job, the Shield and the Holy One of David, the Beloved of Solomon, the precious Corner-stone and the Afflicted One of Isaiah, the Righteousness of Jeremiah, the Shepherd King of Ezekiel, the Messiah of Daniel, the Lord God of Hosts in the abrupt and impassioned utterances of Hosea, the latter-day glory of Joel—the Lord of Amos, the Saviour of Obadiah, the Salvation of Jonah, the Man the Peace of Micah, the bearer of good tidings in the prophecies of Nahum—the Strength of Habbakkuk, the Lord God mighty in the midst of his people, when Zephaniah beheld the dawning of a better time—the Desire of all nations, and the Glory of the second temple in the short predictions of Haggai—the Branch of Zechariah—the Lord the Messenger, the Sun of Righteousness in the closing visions of Malachi, and the light and the life, and the glory, of all that the evangelists and apostles have spoken and written of high and holy themes, stretching from Bethlehem to Bethany, from Bethany to Patmos, and from that island of the sea onwards and beyond the time foretold by the apostle “when the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and every island were moved out of their places.” The Bible is thus inlaid with Christ and his glory; as the firmament above is thickly studded with glittering stars. By his Spirit hath the Almighty garnished the heavens

with the light of stars, and suns, and systems, and by his Spirit hath he garnished the Bible, this great firmament of truth, with the light of the Morning Star, with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, with the grace and glory of the God-Man Mediator mighty to save. Its pages are bright with his love, and fragrant with the odour of his name, "which is as ointment poured forth."

LECTURE VII

MISCELLANEOUS CHARACTERISTICS.

1. Impartiality. 2. Authoritative tone of the Bible. 3. For all practical purposes a plain book. 4. Exhaustless fulness. 5. Unity. 6. Harmony between Scripture and science. 7. Literary beauties—simplicity—sublimity—circumstantiality—vast variety of subject and character—figurative language.

THE subject of the present lecture opens before us a wide field, over which we might range for the longest lifetime, and still be finding something interesting and new. In attempting to portray the characteristics of the Bible, one feels as if standing in the depths of some vast and ancient forest, burdened with the task of counting every tree, or describing the properties of all the vegetable products which the forest contains. Such a work could not be accomplished by any one man, and much less can any one man unfold all the beauties, or exhaust all the treasures, or describe all the properties, of this blessed book. You must, therefore, as if looking upon a landscape of immense extent, and matchless beauty, or upon a picture instinct with life and fraught with interest, or upon the starry heavens, select a few of the more prominent features, a few of the brighter stars “from the floor of heaven, thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.” I can only direct your attention to a few miscellaneous details, by way of appendix to those which were advanced in the previous lecture.

1. *Impartiality* is another striking characteristic of the Bible. Had its writers not been inspired, how could they have

written such an impartial book? To expect this was more than human; and yet how rigidly scrupulous, how sternly impartial is it with all the subjects, ranks, and conditions of men that pass under its review! There is no pandering to the rich, there is no flattery of the great, there is no affected compassion, no mere mock sentimentalism for the sufferings of the poor—there is no undue elevation of one class at the expense of another,—priest and people, king and subject, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, professional and unprofessional, are all placed before its impartial tribunal, and whilst all are regarded as on a level, inasmuch as all are sinners, every one is condemned or approved, not because he belongs to this or the other class, but simply because his actions are in conformity or otherwise with the requirements of this book. Can you conceive of uninspired men, and men especially in the position and circumstances of the sacred writers, dealing with such impartiality as this? Read the reproofs, the condemnations, the woes pronounced by the ancient prophets, and more especially by the Saviour. Read the exhortations of the apostles, and if there is only one impartial book in the world, that book is the Bible.

Have the sacred writers, even in any one instance, endeavoured to cloak the guilty deeds of its eminent heroes? Have they not rather, with an unsparing hand, thrown these into the foreground, in order that all might see how thin is the partition which divides the greatest saint from the greatest sinner, and that all might be duly impressed with the importance of the injunction, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This exposure of the infirmities of Scripture heroes has been by not a few turned into an objection against the Bible; but this is to me a very convincing proof that had its writers not been inspired, they would have withheld altogether those dark details of sin, and dwelt only upon the virtues of the characters they describe; and had this been the case, one great moral purpose of the Bible, viz., warning, correction, instruction, would have been lost.

"Romancers have in view the exaltation of their hero.

Even the gravest and most tasteful of them scarcely glance at a fault. How has Xenophon presented his Cyrus; Homer his Achilles; Virgil his Æneas? Whatever we, judging by our standards, may find in them which is faulty, it was not the intention of these respective writers to hold up any faults to view. Is it so with the picture of David, in the book of Kings? So with the picture of even "the wisest of men." And if it be said that the books of Chronicles have kept the faults of these distinguished personages out of view, the reply is easy: The story was already told in the book of Kings, and the chronicler had in view principally what these Jewish monarchs did to accommodate, arrange, and complete the worship of God in the manner prescribed by Moses.

"No; the histories of the Jews are unlike those of all other nations. God, and his honour, and worship, and ordinances, are the *nucleus* of them all. Men—the whole nation—are but secondary actors in this great drama. A David and a Solomon come before the tribunal of the historian, at his bidding laying aside their crowns, and their heroism, and their wisdom, and standing there to be judged for their vices as impartially as the meanest subject in their kingdom. Is this so elsewhere, and in respect to men whose virtues are pre-eminent? I cannot find it.

"How then was all this brought about? Not by *forgers* and *impostors*; not by the ordinary tactics of national historians and the writers of memoirs. There is an honesty, an integrity, a boldness, an independence, a love of truth, and a hatred of sin in every form, which stands out to view so prominently in all the historians and prophets of the Hebrews, that I feel compelled to say, The hand of the Lord is here; his Spirit breathed into these writers the breath of a piety which could not die; it kindled a flame in their breasts, whose light all the surrounding darkness could not extinguish."¹

2. *The authoritative tone* in which the Bible speaks is an-

¹ Stuart on the Old Testament Canon.

other characteristic which distinguishes it from all other books. It is the word of God, and why should He speak in the language of diffidence, apology, or excuse? It reveals, commands, exhorts, with an absolute authority, which none but God himself can assume. It is not careful to assign reasons. Why should it? Many of these, if given, would in the present state be altogether beyond our comprehension. It has spoken with absolute authority, combined with affectionate frankness, whilst at the same time it has maintained a dignified reserve on many points. Why not? when "the Lord, the everlasting God, the creator of the ends or the earth," has condescended to speak to man "whose foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth." If a Divine revelation has been given at all, a high tone of authority must be one of its distinguishing features; and this is pre-eminently the case with the Bible. Had it been of the "earth, earthy," it must have borne the marks of a crouching spirit, and a fulsome and a cringing apology; but so far from this, it comes with the independent preface of "Thus saith the Lord"—followed by command, precept, promise, threatening, till it reaches the climax of authoritative announcement, "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." And why not? God speaks with authority, and who shall question his right to do so? All that he has said is founded upon sovereign goodness, justice, and truth. Could any men but those who were really conscious that they were inspired, speak in such an authoritative tone as the sacred writers have done? Is it likely that the poor fishermen of Galilee would have assumed such an authority had they not been taught of God, and had they not been assured that they were speaking in His name? Christ himself spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes; and, in this respect, all the writers in the New Testament imitated his example, and rising to the full height of their exalted mission, they spoke to all classes of men with an authority altogether unknown to the wisest sages of former times.

3. *The Bible is, for all practical purposes, a plain book.* For all the great practical ends of our being, it is so plain that "he that runneth may read, and a wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein." It is, indeed, true that there are many mysterious subjects referred to in the Bible, and many difficult doctrinal points, which it is evidently more our duty to believe than to make the subjects of endless discussion and speculation; for "here we know but in part," and here "we see through a glass but darkly." I admit at once that there are difficulties in the Bible, that there are mysteries, not in the sense of being contrary to, but in the meantime above, our reason. What then? Do these disprove it to be the Word of God? No, verily! Any book assuming to be a revelation from the great God, without any reference to a vast ocean of truth, to a mighty sea of unfathomed depth, could not come from God, had there been in that book no upward glance at alpine heights, the towering summits of which were wholly lost in the clouds; had it been altogether plain, and neat, and trim, and playfully imaginative, without threading, in one direction or another, the mystery of being, without drawing aside the veil of the past or the curtain of the future, without throwing upon the ear of man broken utterances, and all but discordant sounds, which will one day form the highest harmony—the soul of music, the very hymn of the universe itself, such a book could not have been to me at least, the Bible, a revelation from the Most High. And why? Simply because I should reasonably expect that there would be some points of resemblance, some analogies between the volume of revelation and the book of nature. I could not expect that in the revelation made by God to man in his present circumstances there would be no difficulties, no partial revealments, no fragmentary announcements, no dazzling and glorious truths looming only in the far distance, and unapproachable by man so long as he wears the polluted vestments of mortality. It is so in the material world, and why not in the Bible, if both claim to be the workmanship of God? There are many difficulties,

many mysteries in nature which all science and all philosophy have not yet been able to explain, and probably never will on this side of time. Life altogether is a mystery, on through every stage of being from the very first quiver, from the very first shooting pang that bespeaks a new-born though invisible immortality, on—on “till the silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl shall be broken.” What is life? what is light? what is heat? what is electricity? what is magnetism? what is gravitation? what is the connection between the mind and the body? what are the conditions in which spirit and matter can act and react upon one another? what is the philosophy of vegetation? why does the earth produce, in the space of a few inches, flowers of different forms and various hues? why has she all colours at her command? who will explain her wonderful chemistry or the profound secrets of that laboratory from which she produces such striking phenomena? Here, then, are endless difficulties around us, above us, within us. And why should we not expect to find difficulties in the Bible, if, like the volume of nature, it has come from God?

And yet the book of nature is, like the Bible, for all practical purposes, a plain book. The miner knows nothing of geology, and yet he finds his way into the depths of the earth, and brings to light the precious metals. The mariner knows nothing about the various theories of winds, yet he spreads his sails, and brings his vessel to the wished-for harbour. The husbandman knows nothing about the process of vegetation, but nevertheless he tills his land. He lays open the furrow to the gentle rain and the genial sunshine; he scatters his seed into the gracious bosom of the earth, and his labours are crowned with an abundant harvest. And yet what does he know of the mysterious secrets involved in all this? And yet how plain, how easy, has all his labour been? He might have started a thousand speculations, and raised as many questions, and as many doubts, which in the end would have given him barren lands and empty garners; but he had nothing to do with these questions. He left nature

to take charge of her own secrets. He did his duty, and the result was in his, as in all other cases—gain. In like manner the Bible is, for all practical purposes, a plain book. There are, indeed, secret things, but these belong to God; “but things that are revealed to us and to our children.”

There is no book so plain, so simple as the Bible, in everything that pertains to godliness and eternal life. Its very plainness, in this respect, is the very reason why many reject it. What more plain, what more simple, than for the husbandman to till his land, to sow his seed, and to reap his fields? And what more plain, what more simple, than the way of salvation, as revealed in the Bible? Here also, if we but “break up the fallow ground” of our own hearts, we shall be blessed. Here also, if we but sow, in obedience to the commands of God, we shall reap. Alpine heights there are whose summits are buried amid the clouds; but our way to the Cross does not lie over these. Let us keep in the valley of humiliation in the meantime, assured that a time is coming, “when higher, higher, we shall climb up the mount of glory;” and when “that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall be come,” and the mists that now surround us shall be cleared away by the bright and the broad light of eternal sunshine.

“Strong, Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace;
Believing where we cannot prove:—
We have but faith: we cannot know:
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.”

This is the spirit which we ought to cherish. Waiting in darkness for more light, “believing where we cannot prove,” and looking forward to the time when “we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known.” Meantime we have this to assert in behalf of the Bible, that for all practical purposes it is a plain book, and opens up a plain pathway to honour, glory, and immortal bliss.

4. *The exhaustless fulness of the Bible.*—In this respect it resembles nature, or rather the universe itself. Who has exhausted the glorious wonders of the firmament above? who has led out all its starry hosts? who has counted all its glittering worlds? who has stood upon the ramparts of the universe, and gazed upon the farthest off twinkling star in the wide regions of space? Not one of Adam's sons has done this. No, not even during the long period that has elapsed since the time the first Chaldean shepherd gazed upon the starry firmament from the plains of Shinar up to the present hour, when the wonders of the starry firmament have been revealed by the mighty telescope of Rosse. The onward march of science only widens the sweep of heaven's ceaseless and glorious wonders. The Bible is but the counterpart of nature in this respect. It is literally exhaustless. Not one from Moses, its earliest writer, up to the last student who shall ponder its pages, even at the time when its last prophetic announcement shall be fulfilled, and the destiny of earth completed, shall be able to exhaust the wonders of the Bible, or drain its mighty channels dry, which are fed from the river of God itself. Can this be said of the mightiest book that man has ever written, whatever may have been the theme on which his intellect, and imagination, and life, have been expended? It is comparatively easy to exhaust the most prodigious book that has ever been written; but the Bible, comprised *in one small volume*, is ever new, ever fresh, ever suggestive, even after a perusal of life's longest term, fourscore years. One, or two, or three readings, at most, will exhaust any book, but it is quite the reverse with the Bible. Every perusal invites another, and every new reading only reveals new wonders, opens up more glorious truths. The shadowy becomes real—the dim more brilliant—the distant is brought near—the faint and the doubtful whisper from above waxes stronger and stronger, and swells into the audible and powerful voice of God himself.

How fondly do we turn to the green fields, to the bosom of nature! and every time we do so, we find something fresh and

something new—something bathed in the sunny smile, or baptised in the dew-drops of a Father's love ; and so is it with the Bible. O man, it is from God to thee ! It is the opening smile, the fresh sunshine, the balmy breath, the dew-drops of eternal love, to woo thee back from darkness, to scatter the light of heaven around thy path, to fan thy aching temples, and to calm, and refresh, and sustain, thy jaded and weary soul. And sooner canst thou exhaust the wonders and the beauties of mountain, flood, and field—of fountain, fruit, and flower—of thought, and time, and tide—of star, and sun, and system, than thou canst exhaust this richest mine of truth, this deep well-spring, issuing from the throne of God, exhaustless and expansive as his own loving heart, and far-reaching and all-embracing as his eternal purposes of wisdom and love.

“God made the country, but man made the town ;” and man has made the libraries, the wood, and the stone, and the lime of literature, in every department ; *but God has made the Bible*. He has breathed into its pages the breath of life, and it has become a quickening spirit, to give light and life to the darkened and the dead soul of man.

5. *There is a Divine unity in the Bible*, just as there is in nature. There is great variety, but at the same time a striking unity. There is also in this respect a marked resemblance between the material world and the Bible. Nearly fifty writers were employed upon this book, stretching over a period of sixteen centuries. They have touched upon a great variety of details, some of them the most sublime themes that can engage the mind of man or of angel—themes upon which it was impossible for two men to think or write, or speak, with any thing like harmony of sentiment or purpose, without extravagant speculation or sheer puerility, unless they had been sustained and guided by a superior power ; and yet here are about fifty writers, each one delivering his own fragment, necessary for the completion of a Divine revelation, and doing this without any previously

concerted plan or understanding amongst themselves, many of them separated by great distances, and by long intervals of time, and even whilst treating of the sublimest and the most varied details—the visible and the invisible—even whilst soaring to the highest realities, in gazing upon which mortal vision becomes dazzled, for their range of thought embraces the alpine height of sublime truth, on the dizzying pinnacles of which man feels as if caught up into the third heavens, as well as the far stretching valley—the shoreless ocean, as well as the common track of ordinary life; and yet, whatever be their theme, whether God or man, the creation of the world or the counsels of eternity—heaven, or earth, or hell—angels of light or of darkness—the church in the wilderness or the church in glory—man redeemed or man lost—there is throughout all this exhaustless variety of detail, just as amid the boundless variety and profusion of nature, the harmony of fixed law, of established purpose—the golden chain of a beautiful unity runs through all, and links all to the throne of the eternal One.

There is in nature a wonderful, an exhaustless variety, and yet a most palpable and striking unity. So is it with the Bible. There is a godlike oneness in its variety. There may be some things which seem to mar this harmony, to break this unity; but all this is more apparent than real. There is far less in the Bible to shake our faith in God, as its author, than there is amid all the varied phenomena of nature, to disturb our belief in the fact (for after all who can doubt it?) that the material creation is the work of a Being all-wise, powerful, and good.

Our world is a sphere or a globe. Are you not ready to say, how can it be so? The gigantic mountains upon its surface must destroy its rotundity. No! These affect its roundness just as much as a grain of sand would affect the roundness of a small artificial globe. Our world, seen by any inhabitant of a distant planet, must appear as round as the moon does to us. Could we gaze upon our world, moving in the ethereal expanse, notwithstanding all its mountains

and caverns, and the inequalities of its surface, it would appear a glorious full orb of light and beauty. And so will it be when we come to look at the glorious truths of the Bible from a higher point of vision than at present. Those things which we are apt to regard as destructive of unity, will be merged in the general law of harmony, which will be found to pervade the book of revelation as much as it does the book of nature. Those apparent little disharmonies which many regard as insurpassable mountains, have just as little effect, after all, in impairing the essential unity and harmony of the Bible, as the mountains have in affecting the rotundity of our earth as a globe. They affect the value or the harmony of the Bible, just as little as a grain of sand impairs the roundness of a small artificial globe, or as the small and almost imperceptible flaw in the casket diminishes the preciousness or the brilliancy of the sparkling gem that is contained within.

6. *The harmony between Scripture and Science.*—This topic will doubtless attract a much larger share of attention than it has yet done. In the meantime I have only space for a few brief remarks. Many portions of the Bible were written at a very early period, when scientific research was but feebly pursued, and but barren in its results,—at a remote period, when many of the sciences were altogether unknown,—and yet there is a striking harmony between Scripture statements and scientific discoveries. Take the account of the creation, for example, in connection with the discoveries of astronomy and geology, and that account, and these discoveries, are mutually confirmatory of one another. It is not within the range of possibility that Moses, at such an early period, when he had no established scientific data to go upon, could have formed, in the exercise of his own unaided reason, such sublime conceptions regarding the creation as he has done, and which the discoveries of science are only confirming more and more. He has traversed a sublime region of inquiry, which even fifteen centuries after

his time was altogether a region of darkness to the wisest philosophers of the ancient world—a region of inquiry regarding which they formed the wildest notions and absurdest theories—which have vanished before the light of science, whilst the opening statements of Moses are only being more and more confirmed as science is advancing towards the noontide effulgence of the perfect day.

There is a Divine simplicity, abruptness, and sublimity in the opening statement of the Bible. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” How dangerous and presuming for the unaided reason of man to attempt to traverse such an unknown region as this. How could Moses have attempted to do so, unless he had been divinely inspired? The subsequent discoveries of science might have shattered to pieces his theory of creation, however attractive, plausible, and ingenious, but this has not been the case with the Mosaic account of the creation. It was once feared by many, and by others fondly hoped, that the discoveries of geology would obliterate for ever the opening statements of this book. But how stands the case? The one is a confirmation of the other. Geology claims for the mass or the *materiel* of the globe a much greater antiquity than six thousand years. These claims are supported by the very best evidence; but this, instead of being contradictory to, is only, and that in a most striking way, confirmatory of the opening statement of the Bible, which presents us with an indefinite period—a long succession of ages, during which the mass or the *materiel* of the earth existed, but not yet as a fitting habitation for man, but for the races of creatures now extinct; and during the lapse of those ages the mass of the earth doubtless underwent many of those changes which geology has discovered, and which were gradually preparing the earth for that display of Divine power, when it was brought into the present state of order and beauty, and made the abode of man, *about six*

thousand years ago. Geology has confirmed, but not in one single instance controverted, the statements of Moses in reference to the creation. It was not possible "that the unaided reason of man could go so far back, and make positive, oracular assertions, and not form mere conjectures, regarding events that transpired in the depths of eternity, without coming into constant collision with the discoveries of a matured and enlightened philosophy in a subsequent age. Yet Moses has done this, many ages before geology had a place in the scientific vocabulary of any nation, and his opening statements and the discoveries of geology, are mutually confirmatory of each other. This was not the result of random or previous knowledge on his part; for the Egyptians, in whose wisdom and learning he was expert, knew nothing of this.

It is most gratifying to find that recent discoveries in astronomy, geology, and recent investigations into the differences that exist amongst the various races of men, as to language and external appearance, have all confirmed more and more the opening statements of Moses in reference to the existence of light before the present established order of things was called into being—the recent creation of man—the account which he has given of the Deluge—and his statements regarding the origin of the race in a single pair. Recent discoveries, instead of contradicting, tend more and more to confirm all these statements. How, then, did he come to possess that prodigious amount of knowledge at such an early date in the history of the world, which enabled him to make such statements regarding the most difficult points in the whole range of physical inquiries, and the correctness of which the discoveries of three thousand years have only been verifying? He was unlike all other inquirers, all other philosophers, for he had no previously existing data to go upon, and yet, instead of forming wild speculations, and constructing dreamy and baseless theories, which the discoveries of every succeeding year might destroy, he was the high priest of nature; and in strict harmony with her

own truthful and loving spirit, he brought to light her remotest history and her most hidden truths.

It has been insinuated that Moses derived all his knowledge of his ancient cosmogony from the Egyptians, amongst whom he was reared. If so, surely there would be traces of this knowledge in their ancient records; surely it would be found sculptured upon some of those hoary monuments, containing such a mass of hieroglyphics. And at one time it was the proud, though premature and vain boast of not a few, that when once those hieroglyphics were deciphered, the Hebrew legislator would appear, after all, to be but a mean and a hypocritical plagiarist. Those monuments have been deciphered; but the originality and sublimity of the Mosaic narrative remain untouched. No such knowledge as Moses displays ever existed in the schools of the Egyptians. Their wise men were either altogether silent or foolish upon the great questions which form the sublime exordium of this inspired book. Their oracles were dumb; their hoary monuments contained no philosophical records from which Moses could copy.

How can you account for the amazingly correct views of the sacred writers, especially of the earliest, Moses himself, when they happen to allude to difficult points in physical science? How is it that in this respect they were before the learned of their own times, and yet had never enjoyed the learning of the schools? How can you account for this on any other supposition, than that the writers of the Bible were taught of God, who by wisdom formed the earth, and garnished the heavens? Let it be observed, however, that when the sacred writers speak of natural phenomena, they do so in a *popular* form, and this was the only way in which they could have been understood at the time in which they wrote. And even yet, their language is the best adapted to the people, and is the ordinary language employed by philosophers themselves, in describing the natural phenomena of everyday life. The sacred writers speak of the *rising and the setting of the sun*, because their object was to write so as to be understood by all—to describe nature as it appeared to

the eye, and not according to strict scientific formulæ and rules. And would not even Herschel, and Arago, and Nichol, employ the same phraseology, when speaking of nature, in the language of ordinary men, and of everyday life?

A celebrated writer has well observed, "Should a stickler for Copernicus and the true system of the world carry his zeal so far as to say *the city of Berlin sets* at such an hour, instead of making use of the common expression, *the sun sets at Berlin at such an hour*, he speaks the truth, to be sure, but his manner of speaking it is pedantry."

Professor Hitchcock of America, whose recent work upon the religion of geology I most warmly commend to your careful perusal, has well observed, "Upon the whole, every part of science which has been supposed, by the fears of friends or malice of foes, to conflict with religion, has been found at length, when fully understood, to be in perfect harmony with its principles, and even to illustrate them. It is high time, therefore, for the friends of religion to cease fearing any injury to the cause of religion from science, and high time also for the enemies to cease expecting any such collision."

7. I cannot close this lecture without briefly calling your attention to a topic which might form, in itself, a most interesting volume. I refer to the *literary beauties* of the Bible. If I should detain you a little longer on the present occasion, the interest associated with this topic is my only apology. Like the great volume of nature, which the finger of God has *illustrated*, by towering mountain, sweeping valley, rushing cataract, roaring flood, and rippling stream shadowed by trees, and fringed with flowers, the Bible was designed to be attractive, and that not only from the great and glorious truths which it contains, but from the manner in which these have been delivered. Nature, in her external aspect, is designed to attract, and win the soul of man to nature's God; and so is it with the Bible, in its very external features of style. Nature is simple, sublime, grandly mysterious, majestic, affectionate, most richly diversified; and so

is the Bible. The analogy between both is such as to point us at once to the common source from which they have both emanated, the hand and the heart of God himself.

In point of antiquity, the Bible is the most interesting book in the world. The Song of Moses, the first inspired writer, was heard on the banks of the Red Sea centuries before the father of Grecian poetry had strung his harp to sing the fate of Troy. Moses is not only the father of poetry, but he is the father of history. He is the only star that rose upon the darkness of the first 2000 years in the history of the world. He was the first who seized the pen of the historian and the harp of the poet; and he had already lighted the torch of history, which has never been extinguished, and evoked the spirit of song, which has never died away, five hundred years before the oldest human historian kindled his feeble and glimmering lamp, and struck the first pale and sickly light, not from the materials of true history, but from the smouldering rubbish of tradition and fable. The hoar antiquity of the Bible itself may well claim for it an attentive perusal and a reverential regard.

The Bible is in its style at once *simple and sublime*, clear, concise, and animated—in its figures rich and varied; whilst in the subjects which it discusses there is at times a length and a breadth, a depth and a height, far beyond the reach of uninspired intellect. It was not possible that the ear of man, unless it had been opened by Him who formed it, could have heard the organ swell of the universe, the rushing sound as of many waters; it was not possible that he could have formed the mighty diapason from the soft and gentle murmur of Siloah's fount that flowed fast by the oracles of God, up to the full quivering notes of joy or the crashing thunders of the storm when God rideth upon the wings of the wind. And then in its wondrous personages and characters the Bible is no less diversified than it is in the wide range of its subjects. It is the universe in miniature—it is eternity unfolding itself in time.

Simple and sublime! What more so than the opening

statements in the book of Genesis? About to discuss the grandest theme, the creation of the world, the sacred writer does not at all seem conscious of this—there is no invocation to either mortal upon earth or spirit in heaven—there is neither trembling apology upon the one hand, nor flourish of trumpets upon the other, but he begins the poem of the universe, the sacred drama of time and eternity, with all the artless simplicity of a child, and yet with all the sublimity of a mighty, inspired poet.

It seems almost incompatible at first sight that the simple can be associated with the sublime in style and conception; but the sublime of the Scripture is always simple. There is no laboured effort, no swelling bombast, no turgid and impetuous torrent that brawls, and boils, and foams, and casts up the clay and the rubbish which it has borne along with it, but there is simplicity without puerility, animation without levity, and sublimity without bombast. What language can be more truly simple, and yet more figurative, animated, and sublime, than the following :—"He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And He rode upon a cherub and did fly—yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." Or, again: "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet."

Simplicity and *circumstantiality* are marked characteristics of the Gospel narratives. The very simple, unaffected style in which the gospels are written is a strong proof of the inspiration of the New Testament. The evangelists never, in a single instance, seem at all desirous to make the most of any event they record. There is an air of truthful simplicity about all they say. Their style, verily, must have been far different from what it is, had they been conscious that they were penning a lie. They write the simple truth in the most unadorned and simple language, with a briefness, an abruptness, and an entire absence of display, a precise and naked *circumstantiality* which ren-

dered imposture impossible, and which it will be difficult to account for on any other supposition than that they were inspired men. Take the following as an example:—"And when even was come the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them: but when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out. For they all saw him and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, 'Be of good cheer. It is I; be not afraid.' And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased." Mark vi. 47. Now, how very little is made of this narrative, and yet how full is it of what has been termed "the truly sublime," by those who have expressly written on the subject! The Saviour walking amid the heaving billows of the lake, in the gray dawn of a tempestuous morning—the dark outline of the figure indistinctly seen, and suddenly appearing, suggests at once to the affrighted disciples the supernatural and the ghostly. Or take again another occasion, when the storm came down upon the lake, and the Saviour rises from the hinder part of the ship, in all the power and composure of Divine majesty, and rebuked the winds and the waves (what a beautiful instance of bold personification!), and said "Peace, be still!" and there was a great calm.

In the whole range of literature, where will you find a more striking instance of the simple, the animated, and the deeply pathetic, than in the following touching narrative, where the dark march of suffering advances step after step, till it reaches the very climax in the agony of despair and death?—"Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim that he could not see. And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, what is there done, my son? And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great

slaughter among the people, and thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man, and heavy: and he had judged Israel forty years.”¹ Picture to yourselves the aged priest, over whom a century had nearly passed, seated by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. Then listen to the sad tidings; every succeeding word of which becomes sadder than the former. “*Israel is fled before the Philistines.*” Heavy news! But sadder still: “*And there hath been also a great slaughter among the people.*” And still more intensely sad “*Thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead.*” How bitter all this to the old man’s heart, who had spoiled his sons through over indulgence, and on account of whose profligacy the nation was ruined. But the worst is still to come: “*And the ark of God is taken.*” The token of the Divine presence is gone. The aged man could not survive such a stroke as this. *Ichabod!* the glory had departed, and he died. And what can be more simple in point of narrative, yet sublime in point of conception, than the whole dramatic narrative of Elijah in the cave upon Mount Horeb when “the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave; and behold there came a voice unto him and said—What doest thou here, Elijah?”² This is a striking instance of the simple and the sublime, where the raging of the elements is awfully associated with the dim outline of the supernatural and the voice of God. There are many

¹ 1 Samuel iv. 15.

² 1 Kings xix. 11.

other instances that might be adduced. Take one from the book of Job:—"Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof—in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men—fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up; it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes—there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying—Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"¹

Few passages of Scripture have struck me more with a feeling of the sublime, and yet a strange peculiar awe, than the following:—"I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."²

The figurative language of the Bible is wondrously rich and varied. Its figures, drawn from the fertile stores of inspired imagination, flash upon its pages like the bright stars in the azure vault of heaven. Many of them are bold, and daring, and majestic, like the giant mountains, that shoot their summits far beyond the clouds. Simile, metaphor, allegory, personification, and apostrophe, in their boldest forms, are scattered everywhere with a seemingly careless and accidental profusion—the very reverse of laboured cogitation—but scattered lavishly over the broad page of God's Word, like daisies upon the hill-side, or roses upon the bright

¹ Job iv. 12.

² Zechariah i. 8.

hedge-rows; and they fill our hearts with a sense of the beautiful, and people our brightest imaginings with forms of loveliness, and gem the fair bosom of truth, like those beautiful islands in the Pacific, which have given the charm of varied music and loveliness to the monotonous murmur and the wide sweep of old ocean.

How numerous, and varied, and profoundly interesting, are the subjects and characters the sacred writers have brought before us! In this respect, what book can for one moment be compared with the Bible? Shakspeare and Scott have been exalted for the variety of subject and character which they have discussed with such a profound knowledge of the human heart; but how stunted and meagre do they become, when compared with the vast range of subjects and characters brought before us in the Bible! This book, illustrated by painting or sculpture, would require a gallery with the range of the universe itself. Here are the great progenitors of our race—the murdered Abel and the banished Cain—the lost bowers of Paradise, guarded by the flaming sword of the cherubim, turning every way to guard the tree of life—the mighty, yet the wicked race of men before the flood, amongst whom Enoch walked with God, and was taken from earth to heaven—Noah and his sons—the world drowned and the world restored—the patriarchs, with all the affecting circumstances connected with their families—Abraham in his tent door at Mamre, or on Mount Moriah, offering his son—the burial of Sarah—the death of Rachel—Joseph and his brethren—the death scene of Jacob—Moses, and the wanderings of his people—Miriam and Deborah—the trials and the patience of Job—the affecting story of Ruth, unequalled for simplicity and tenderness—Esther, and her uncle Mordecai—Haman and Ahithophel, and Judas, of later times—David, and his son Absalom—the venerable Eli, his own tragic death, and that of his two sons—Saul and Jonathan slain upon the mountains of Gilboa—Elijah and the prophets of Baal, with the scene of trial at Mount Carmel—his despondency in the cave—his glorious exit in the

chariot of fire—Elisha at the plough, and afterwards smiting the waters of the Jordan with the mantle of Elijah—the impious lives and awful deaths of Ahab and his queen Jezebel—the succession of wicked kings—the captivity—the exiles at Babylon—the worthies of that time—Daniel and his companions—Nehemiah building the walls of Jerusalem and the sepulchres of his fathers—Isaiah, with his glorious visions and prophetic rapture—Solomon and his greatness—Belshazzar and his impious feast—Jeremiah and his dungeon—Ezekiel and his mystic wheels—the prophets, and their symbols—Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Bethany, Gethsemane and Calvary—the beautiful female characters of the New Testament—the Marys, and all of like spirit—Peter in prison—Paul before Agrippa—John in Patmos—and, above all, Jesus Christ himself, whose life is the light and the glory of the Bible ;—these are some of the subjects and some of the characters brought before us in this wonderful book, from which the greatest painters, and sculptors, and musicians, have been supplied with the noblest materials upon which to lavish the highest efforts of their genius, and by which to embellish and immortalise their respective arts.

What are all the characters and subjects of Shakspeare, and Scott, and Byron—numerous, and varied, and striking, as many of them doubtless are—compared with these Scripture characters and subjects, either in point of number, variety, execution, or interest? Is there any book in the world from which the masters of the fine arts could select more interesting materials, that would be more true to nature, and to which their genius could be more successfully applied? The most eminent artists, such as Raphael, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, Poussin, Rubens, Martin, and West, have found, in the rich literary stores of the Bible, the finest materials for the highest efforts of their genius. An illustrated Shakspeare or Scott is comparatively an easy work; but an illustrated Bible, in all its details of affecting interest and sublimest grandeur, what a task!

There is no book, in a literary point of view, so bold, I

had almost said, recklessly daring, as the Bible. It ranges the universe with a daring sweep, and having grouped objects together, which the boldest imagination could never have attempted to do, it makes them stand out in words of winged fire.

In proof of this, turn to the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, where Jehovah is represented as measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand, spanning the mighty arch of heaven, comprehending the dust of the earth in a measure, weighing the everlasting mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; sitting upon the circle of the earth—stretching out the heavens as a tent to dwell in, and calling upon the people to lift up their eyes on high, and behold the stars which He has formed, and know that He, “the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary, for He bringeth out the host of heaven by number, He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth.”

Take again, for example, a few instances from the book of Job, where the Almighty is represented as answering him out of the whirlwind, and you are hurried at once downward to the very foundations of the earth—you are carried back to the time when the corner-stone was laid, and you join in the chorus of the morning stars and the sons of God, when they shouted for joy—you are carried back to the birth of ocean, when it was swaddled in thick darkness, shut up with doors and bars, and checked in its wild gambols, like a playful young giant, restrained by the hand of his father—from the ocean you are carried to the secret place of the morning, to the palace of the day-spring, from which it goes forth to the ends of the earth—again are you brought to the springs of the sea, and from this rushing of many waters you are carried to the gates of death, and to the doors of the shadow of death, and onwards to the path of the light and the habitation of darkness—from this you are brought into the magazine of the snow and the storehouse of the hail, the chambers of the rain, the abode of the east wind, and the ways of the lightning and

the thunder—again you descend to earth, and you are carried to the wilderness, where there is no man, and where the rain has fallen to satisfy the desolate and waste ground—and standing alone in this dreary solitude of nature, the Almighty breaks the dread silence, and demands of you, “Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?” From the wilderness below, you are transported to the flaming constellations above, and it is again demanded of you in this wide wilderness of light, and beauty, and blazing stars, “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?” and then descending again to earth, the brinded lion couching in his den, lying in wait for his prey—the raven and his young ones wandering for lack of meat—the wild goats on the rugged rock—the wild ass, with the mountain range for his pasture—the unicorn, that cannot be bound in the furrow—the peacock with goodly wings—the ostrich, with her gay feathers—the horse, with his neck clothed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, pawing in the valley, rejoicing in his strength, going forth to meet the armed men, mocking at fear, smelling the battle afar off, swallowing the ground in his fierceness and rage, laughing at the trumpet, the sword, the glittering spear, and the shield—the hawk soaring aloft, and stretching her wings towards the south—the eagle making her nest on high, and from the crag of the rock swooping down upon her prey—the sea-horse, with bones like strong pieces of brass, lying in the covert of the reed and fens, under the shady trees, and drinking up a river—the leviathan, out of whose mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out, whose scales are his pride, and his eyes like the eyelids of the morning, which esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood—these are all brought before you in magnificent, panoramic succession, and all in a few verses. Job xxxviii. ; xxxix. There are objects grouped together in all the living truth of nature,

and invested with all the charms of the most animated description ;—objects from all the varied provinces of the material universe, that would take a hundred Landseers a whole lifetime to illustrate, and even when done, the canvass would fail to present such a perfect picture of these as the one brought before us in the glowing words of the sacred writer.

Apart altogether from inspiration, the Bible, in a literary point of view, is the most wonderful book in the world. It is well entitled to its name, “The Book of books.” There is no wonder that even Shelley himself, that singularly gifted but unfortunate son of genius, when asked by a friend what book he would save for himself if he could save no other, replied, “The oldest book, the Bible.” And well does it merit the following beautiful eulogium of that accomplished oriental scholar, Sir William Jones :—“ I have regularly and attentively perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that this volume, independently of its Divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written.”

Another characteristic which is worthy of notice, is the intense sympathy which the sacred writers cherish for external nature in all its varied moods and aspects. A sympathy such as theirs is the soul of all true poetry and religion. But, however tempting such a theme is at present, I must reserve it for another lecture. In the meantime, I have brought before you a few miscellaneous characteristics of this book, which I fondly hope may be the means of leading you to a more careful perusal of its contents, and of deepening the conviction in your minds, that it has come from the source of all intelligence—the Father of lights, and that, even in a literary point of view, it is worthy of your careful study and profound regard

LECTURE VIII.

THE BIBLE AND THE LOVE OF NATURE.

Nature and revelation, their relative position and claims. The Bible pervaded by an intense love of nature—exemplified in its most illustrious characters—chiefly in Jesus. Lessons from nature. Superior claims of the Bible.

No little injury has been done to Christianity by the indifference which has been frequently manifested by Christians themselves to the varied phenomena and beauties of nature. It has not seldom been thought that allusions to these are out of place in religious themes, as if the works of God, the outspread glories of heaven and earth, were beneath our notice, or as if the God of nature had ever designed, that the book of creation should be dissevered and looked upon as altogether isolated and apart from that volume, in which He has given us the best and completest revelation of his will.

The many-leaved book of nature, with its illustrated pages of Divine wisdom, goodness, and power, was the first book which God presented to man when He placed him in the midst of the garden, and spread before him the fairest forms of creative energy, and man turned to read in every page of this book—in the heavens above, garnished by His spirit—by the light of stars, and suns, and systems—and in the earth beneath, amid the embowering foliage of trees, and the grateful fragrance of flowers, and the cheerful aspect of green fields and rippling streams, the wisdom, power, and goodness of the eternal Father who raised this fair temple

for man to dwell in, and for angelic beings to minister to his wants.

That soul is surely dead to the highest emotions of our nature, it is surely incrustated with selfishness and sensualism, "of the earth earthy," that is not wooed to awe, rapture, purity, peace, devotion, beneath the open gaze of the star-gemmed firmament, or beneath the tremendous cliffs of some giant mountain, or by the shore of the mighty sounding sea, or by the banks of the far-sweeping and mountain-skirted river, or in the depths of the waving forest;—or, to come to more familiar scenes, to the dwellers in busy towns and cities, that soul is surely dead to the highest emotions of our nature, when the simple sight of green fields—the fresh and fragrant hedgerows—the open sky and the laughing sunshine, cannot rouse to glad or solemn, pensive thought—cannot woo onwards to ennobling purity and gladdening peace—cannot beckon upwards to heaven itself—cannot bring nearer to the great Creator who has made this world so beautiful—a place, even independent of the awful worth of immortal souls, for which as an alienated yet lovely province in the empire of God, his own Son might well lay down his life.

The book of nature, so varied, attractive, and lovely, was God's *first Bible* to man; and there would have been no need for another, so very different in character as the written Word is, had not man defaced the moral image of his Maker, engraved at first upon his soul, and disfigured the face of this fair creation by his own sin. God has spoken again by a more powerful voice than all the voices of creation and providence, in the life and death of His own Son; He has given us in the written Word another Bible better adapted to the circumstances of fallen man, than the voices of nature, when he was holy, and there was perfect harmony between himself, external creation, and his God. But nature is still God's voice addressed to man—the book that opens to him first in his earliest years—a book to which he instinctively turns in hours of weariness or sorrow, when the spirit is jaded and chafed amid the cares of life, and whilst with all our

hearts we thank the Giver of all good for the revelations which He has made to us in the written word, let us never become indifferent to the first Bible He gave us, and throw it away and despise it because He has given us a better. This was not the design which God had in view in giving us a revelation of his will in the Holy Scriptures. The one book was designed to be illustrative of the other. The Bible, if rightly studied, will lead us to the study and the love of nature—and nature, if rightly read, will lead us to more lofty conceptions of that God who sits enthroned amid all her ceaseless wonders and glories, and to a higher appreciation of His word, which is given as a light amid that darkness which nature, with all her varied forms of grandeur, magnificence, or placid loveliness, could never dispel—the light that shineth in a dark place—the day-star of hope, and peace, and joy.

There is, however, it must be confessed, oftentimes a mere blind and sensual devotion, so to speak, on the part of many, in their love of nature, and in the pleasure with which they behold a far-stretching and beautiful landscape. A man of fine taste and keen sensibility, will doubtless feel “the rapture of the hour,” when gazing upon the beauties of a lovely scene; but all this may be mere sentimentalism, or, as I have termed it, sensual devotion, without one reference to God that is really purifying to the soul, or without one evangelical sentiment or holy emotion to soothe, to purify, and to heal. Such a view of nature is something akin to a man looking at the beautiful binding, and admiring the elegant finish of a Bible, so far as mere workmanship is concerned, but whose eye is blind to its inward beauties, who is all unconscious of the inner life, the far-reaching thoughts, which its glorious truths ought ever to inspire, and whose soul has never been stirred to its inmost depths by the vast eternity which it unfolds.

The man who can thoroughly enjoy nature, is he who looks upon its outspread glories from the heights of Calvary, and who feels that he is no longer a stranger and an alien in the temple of nature, but a devout worshipper, who has entered by Christ the door, and whose heart has been consecrated

by the truth and the presence of God—this is the man who can love nature with a strong love, not merely in the sensualism of instinct, but in the love of a soul that has been strung anew to the harmonies of nature, because reconciled to God, and brought near to Him in filial affection and confidence through faith in that Divine Man of sorrows—in that crucified Redeemer, who himself loved nature so intensely—this is the man, who, looking abroad upon the outspread glories of nature, can say, “my Father made them all.” In short, before a man can rightly appreciate the beauties and the harmonies of nature, his spirit must be restored, in some measure at least, through faith in Jesus, to the original unity, dignity, and true end of his being; he must have undergone that great spiritual change of which the following passage may be regarded as a beautiful figurative illustration.—“The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines, with the tender grapes, give a good smell.” The dark winter of distance and alienation from God must have passed away; in this spiritual sense, “the winter” must be over and gone; he must know what that change is which gives a new current to a man’s thoughts, a new bias to his affections, a new aim to his whole life, a new character to all his hopes and enjoyments, before he can rightly appreciate the beauties of nature, or the glorious revelations which the Father of mercy has made to His fallen children on the page of Divine truth. I do not mean to deny that the mere lover of nature, without faith in the doctrines of a higher revelation has felt the truth of what the poet has so well said—

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.

But it is only the man who contemplates nature in company with the Saviour, and who looks upon this earth as but the

threshold to the inner glories of the heavenly temple, who loves nature for the sake of that glorious Being who has made it so lovely; it is only he, who, in the contemplation of its beauties, can feel truly and lovingly drawn near to that great Being himself, and who, as he turns to gaze upon the beauties of summer, or looks within himself and feels the progress of the inner spiritual life, can truly say, both as regards the one and the other, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth:"

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Whilst we have thus every reason to value the Bible far more than the book of creation, do not let us disown mother earth, from which we have sprung, and to whose bosom we must return at death. Man was made to love the green fields; he instinctively turns to them like the bird to its nest, like the wearied child to the bosom of its mother, like the exile to the sea, beyond which lies the home of his youth.

"With other ministrations, Thou, O nature,
Healest thy wandering and distempered child;
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,
Thy melody of woods, and winds, and waters,
Till he relent, and can no more endure,
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,
Amidst this general dance and minstrelsy.

* * * * *
His angry spirit healed and harmonised,
By the benignant touch of love and beauty."

"Imagine one transported from squares of houses, where the very sun is hidden, and you see not one object you were born to admire, and set down in the dearest corner of nature's lap, to be caressed and cherished with her choicest sounds and sights—is not this enough almost to change your identity? Whence is it, and why, that the poor spirit, which, from the infancy of its being, has been cooped up in a cage of stone, blank and cheerless stone, no sooner is shown the

smiling face of nature than it yearns and stirs towards her as to a long absent but now restored parent? It is because man and nature were created for each other, were born for mutual endearment—mutual bliss. Is not nature in solitude nature complaining; and what would man become without the influences which he can inhale from her alone? Without a figure, I apprehend that, apart from the mere loveliness of the landscape, its physical charms, and the buoyancy of spirit inspired by the elasticity of the air, there is a moral effusion poured out from the inner fountain, and collected by nature, which the soul sips as a more delicious and life-giving nectar. When God is pleased to breathe his own blessed felt presence over his external platform of creation, then in roaming there we feel that in Him we live and move and have our being.”¹

Good men, in every age, have loved to look upon nature as the mirror upon which were reflected the glorious attributes of Him “who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast.”

Abraham “sat in the tent door” at Mamre, and we can well conceive the delight with which the venerable patriarch looked out upon the far-stretching plains watered by refreshing streams and shaded by the graceful palms—or upon the brilliant stars that gemmed the bosom of an eastern sky, reminding him of that Divine promise, “Tell the stars if thou be able to number them. And He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” “Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide”—a quiet, retiring, contemplative soul, wooed by the sober calm and the pensive loveliness of departing day, and soothed by the gathering shades of the gloaming hour.

The splendour of courts, the bustle and distraction of camps, could not efface from the soul of Israel’s shepherd-king the memory and the love of nature dear to him even when, as a boy, he tended his father’s flocks on the hills of Judea—a love which accompanied him through life, when, as a shepherd, he trod the daisied turf, or when, as king, he

looked abroad upon his wide domains from the battlements of Zion. He loved nature in all her varied moods, and, therefore, he speaks of the voice of the Lord, which in the thunder breaketh the cedars, shaketh the wilderness, divideth the flames of fire—of the whirlwind and the storm, and of the balmy breath of spring, which renews the face of the earth—of the wide-flushing luxuriance of summer, when the pastures drop fatness, and the little hills rejoice on every side—of autumn, with its horn of plenty, when the hills and the valleys shout for joy, and they also sing—of winter, with his venerable grandeur, when “hoar-frost is scattered like ashes, and ice like morsels”—of the heavens, which declare the glory of God, and the firmament, which showeth his handywork—of the earth, with its varied features of loveliness—of “the brook by the way,” which runs among the hills, that the beasts of the field may drink—and of the great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great.

This love of nature was a passion strong even in death. It is well known to you all that a great but unhappy genius, when dying, requested that the window-blinds of his room might not be let down, so that he might see as long as he was able the glories of a July sun—and the last words of Israel's sweetest singer were enriched with figurative allusions drawn from the material world, which no one but a true lover of nature, and a true worshipper of God, could have employed. “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” 2 Samuel xxiii. 3, 4.

All the allusions to the material world, so profusely scattered throughout the book of Psalms, betoken a spirit deeply imbued with a love of nature in all her varied moods, in all her forms of romantic grandeur, or simple, bland, and placid beauty. Thomson's Hymn of the Seasons has been greatly

admired, but it cannot once be compared to the 104th Psalm, which is the divine hymn of nature, in which the sacred minstrel represents the Almighty as clothing himself with light as with a garment. (What a sublime conception!) Stretching out the heavens like a curtain—laying the beams of his chambers in the waters—making the clouds his chariot—walking upon the wings of the wind—settling the foundations of the earth, and covering them with the deep as with a garment—setting a bound to the waters, that they may not pass over—sending the springs into the valleys—giving drink to the beasts of the field, and habitations to the fowls of the heavens—watering the hills from his chambers—causing the grass to grow for cattle—planting the cedars of Lebanon—appointing the moon for seasons—making the darkness and the night, when the wild beasts of the forest creep forth—bringing forth the sun in the morning from the chambers of the east, when the beasts of the forest hasten to their dens, and man goeth forth unto his work, and his morning and evening hymn is this, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches, so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom Thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good; Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die; Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; Thou renewest the face of the earth; Thou lookest upon it, and it trembles; Thou touchest the hills, and they smoke. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works!*”

The sacred writers identified themselves with all the varied changes and objects in nature, as the soul of any truly great poet ever does, for they—

——— “had learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.”

And hence those changes became so many symbols of the glad or gloomy vicissitudes that mark the outer or inner life of man. The lengthening shadows of family or national tribulation, have their counterpart in "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains"—a season of prosperity is "the light that breaks forth as the morning"—the upheavings of nations, the overthrow of powerful dynasties, and periods of great national distress, are "the sea and the waves roaring, the sun darkened in his going forth, the stars of heaven falling to the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind"—youth is "a roe or a young hart leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills"—the hoary hair of old age is the "almond-tree flourishing when the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails"—the frailty of man is "the fading leaf, the grass that groweth up and withereth, the vapour that appeareth but for a little, and then vanisheth away"—the man of true piety is "the tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and her leaf shall be green"—the godless man is "the heath in the desert, that sees not when good cometh, and inhabits the parched places in the wilderness"—the way of the wicked "is darkness"—the path of the just "is the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"—God is "a sun"—God is "light"—his judgments "are a great deep"—his faithfulness and his protection, are "the everlasting mountains that cannot be moved"—Jesus is "the bright and the morning star," the "sun of righteousness," the "rose of Sharon," the "lily of the valley," the "plant of renown," the "apple-tree among the trees of the garden," the "true vine," and his people are "the branches"—the Holy Spirit is "the wind that bloweth where it listeth," "the dew," gentle, silent, refreshing—the fulness of spiritual blessings, is "a place of broad rivers and streams, a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon"—our world "lying in wickedness," when watered by the river of life, is "the wilderness and the solitary place

made glad, and the desert made to rejoice and blossom as the rose"—the exhaustless source of heaven's happiness, is the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb; and the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

But no one ever loved nature with a purer, intenser love than the Saviour himself. We delight to contemplate this feature in the Saviour's character. There is so much of childlike and pure humanity about it. When He walked by the sea of Galilee, as He often did, and felt his jaded spirit soothed by the refreshing sight of its clear waters, and the musical murmur of its waves—when He pointed his hearers to the trooping ravens that hovered above Him, or to the lilies of the field that decked the sides of the mountain—or when we follow Him to the lone mountain, where He loved to retire at the close of the day when his spirit was wearied and broken down by the wickedness of his age—we feel that we are in fellowship with one who, though Divine, has the purest human sympathies; and not the least attractive and prominent of these, is his intense love of nature.

His frequent walks by the sea shore, and on the quiet road, skirted with trees, leading from Jerusalem to Bethany—his wanderings upon the mountains, and all his many beautiful allusions to familiar but never-to-be-forgotten objects in nature, bore witness to the ardent love with which He looked upon the heavens above and the green earth beneath.

His spotless spirit was in harmony with everything that was good, and beautiful, and true. Hence some of his most striking and appropriate illustrations were taken from the mountain flowers or from the moorland birds, or from the varied forms of placid beauty or towering grandeur which the scenery of Judea daily brought before Him.

He loved the quiet, sequestered rural retreat. His sympathies for man, and everything that was human, were of

the purest, the strongest, and the most enduring character ; but He loved the solitude and the calm of the mountain summit, or the woody slope, or the margin of the murmuring brook, or the lone shore of the lake, or the peaceful hamlet nestled in the forest shade, and sheltered by the towering hill, where there was little or nothing to disturb the uniform processes of social life. Hence we find Him oftentimes on the mountain, or by the sea shore, or in the shady walk, or in the midst of the fruitful corn fields.

His love of nature was intense, but not by any means ascetic—not selfish—not leading Him to overlook the great interests of congregated masses in the towns and cities of his country. He who was thrilled with the beautiful landscape of mountain, lake, and valley, of richly cultivated fields,—where art had done its utmost, or where nature was left in all its wild and native grandeur,—that burst upon his view as he descended the slopes of Mount Olivet, paused in deepest anguish of spirit to weep over the guilty city that lay at its base.

The Saviour's love of nature, and, at the same time, his considerate tenderness and unaffected goodness towards man, are beautifully illustrated by that touching incident, which may seem at first sight trifling, but which, nevertheless, reveals a great deal in the character of Christ. When He was surrounded by a famishing and worn-out multitude, He selected a spot best adapted to please the eye, refresh the spirit, and furnish a resting-place to the weary, and it is said, "He made them sit down where there was much grass." This may seem a trifling circumstance, but it is in little, simple things like this that a man's character is best seen ; and in this seemingly trifling circumstance we see at once the Saviour's intense love of nature—his sympathy with all that was fresh and green and lovely around Him, and at the same time his tender, considerate compassion for man.

There is something soothing in the maternal looks of nature. The open sky and the green fields wear a kindly aspect if nothing else should, and many are the sorrowful

hearts that have been soothed by the genial influence of a rural walk.

— " 'Tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

The Saviour himself, when the deepest shades of sorrow began to gather around Him, hastened from the crowded city, to the green fields, and the shady walks, and the murmuring brook of Kedron beyond its precincts. When He "began to be sore amazed and very heavy," He went into the garden of Gethsemane. Thither did He and his disciples oft-times resort. The Mount of Olives now rose before them. It is more than probable that this was the mountain to which He resorted for prayer at the close of the day. The brook Kedron murmured at their feet, and having gained the bridge or the ford that crosses the stream, they reached the solitary walks and the garden-grounds and pasture-fields on the other side. The hour and the place were in harmony with the Saviour's feelings—the still and solemn hour of midnight, in the neighbourhood of a burial place, where the dust of the illustrious dead reposed. Never did cries of such sorrow as those which the Saviour uttered pierce the ear of night before. If the scene and the hour were in harmony with the deep mental anguish which He felt, no less was the place in which He was buried. A celebrated naturalist often expressed the wish that his place of burial might be where the birds might sing over him, and this wish has been long since gratified; and the burial place of the Saviour, in the garden

amid all the beauties of early summer, was in harmony with the sympathies of Him who had loved nature so well.

I am now better prepared to state the object which I have had in view in these remarks than at the outset. My object is to enlist your sympathies on the side of nature, so that the lovely pages which this glorious book contains shall no longer be dull and meaningless to you, but fraught with life and beauty, and high and holy teachings,—so that this book, the first Bible which God gave to man, shall no longer be a sealed book, but patent to all, as its great Author intended it to be, and bright with the glorious impress of a Father's wisdom, goodness, and power.

I am anxious that you should all derive instruction, and soothing and purifying influences from every brief but beautiful glimpse of nature—from the balmy breath of spring, with its young flowers and its buds of downy freshness—from the warm flush and the soft luxuriance of summer—from the mellow days, the golden grain, “the sear and yellow leaf,” and the varied tints of autumn—and from the hoary majesty of winter. I wish you to feel the purifying, elevating influences of nature in all her varied moods, so that you may feel greater sympathy with the Bible descriptions of nature's phenomena, and with the Saviour himself, as you still contemplate Him walking by the sea shore in the pensive musing of the gloaming hour, or on the mountain's brow, when his intense love for nature, and his undying sympathies for man, were at once exhibited with a genuine intensity which earth had never witnessed; and the grass and the wild flowers that grew around, and the birds that winged their flight overhead, have found an imperishable place in that matchless discourse, which will prove as enduring as the everlasting hill, from which it was delivered to the sinful and the suffering multitudes of his day.

When you gaze upon the beauties of an extensive landscape bathed in sunshine, or mellowed down into the soft repose of sober twilight, think of the goodness of God, and rejoice in the work of his hands. Think of the still more glorious scenery of heaven, the central glory of the universe,

where winter never descends to blight nor twilight to shade, "but one unbounded spring encircles all." Think of the happy home where sundered hearts and parted spirits are all gathered into one, and where the material beauties of heaven, intercourse with its pure inhabitants, the glories of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, shall form the blissful elements of permanent happiness, purity, and peace.

Such a study of nature as this will raise you above debasing gratifications, which so many madly seek—will bring you nearer to God—will increase your love to Him, to the Scriptures, and to your fellow-men—will soothe in sorrow—will purify in the midst of conscious pollution—will strengthen every virtuous principle, and brighten every Christian hope, and prepare you for that land where sorrow shall never dim the eye, where sin shall never enter, and the beauties and enjoyments of earth shall be as nothing by reason of the glory that excelleth. Oh, surely the time is coming when men shall thus read the book of nature, and, thus reading, shall be glad, and hopeful, and kind, and this world shall become the footstool of the King of glory, where all nations shall worship Him, and the earth shall roll round its joyful hosannas to Him that loved it, and to Him that redeemed it—then, in the highest sense of the term, may it be said, "The winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

I have thus endeavoured to show you the respective claims which the book of nature and the volume of revelation have upon your attention, your devout and prayerful regards Both have emanated from the great Supreme—both are designed to comfort and instruct; but the best knowledge, which concerns you most to know, is to be found in the Bible—the knowledge of salvation through a crucified Redeemer—and all the promises and prospects connected with that Divine plan of restoration brighten its every page of love, and cheer man amid the sins and sorrows of life, and point

him "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Turn, then, to this book, and study with loving hearts and prayerful spirits the glad tidings which it unfolds. Nature, doubtless, has many voices of kindness, and wisdom, and warning to you; but this contains God's best and dearest treasure—it presents you with the gift of his Son—it offers you pardon, peace, purity, honour, glory, immortal bliss. Whilst you admire the one, you must love the other, as containing blessings which all created worlds cannot bestow. Whilst you are ready to say, "the heavens declare thy glory and the firmament sheweth forth thy handiwork," you must be prepared to behold a greater glory in the word of truth, even that which the psalmist beheld, when he said in the same sacred ode in which he praises the magnificence of creation, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple,"—or with the apostle, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts,"—or with the poet, who has so beautifully sung, when contrasting the book of nature and the volume of revelation,—

"The mountains old and hoar,
The chainless winds, the streams so pure and free.
The God-enamel'd flowers,
The waving forest, the eternal sea,
The eagle floating o'er the mountain's brow,—
Are teachers all; but O! they are not such as thou!"

It is within the pages of the Bible that you find what you cannot discover anywhere else—the love of God to fallen man. The firmament, with all its sparkling suns and systems, cannot brighten your pathway to life and immortality, or shed one feeble glimmering ray over your destiny as fallen beings. The ocean cannot waft you to the haven of peace, or the summer zephyr soothe the troubled conscience to repose; the magnificence of nature, the sublimity of its

grandest scenes, cannot make the sin-wounded spirit of man forget its sorrows or bury in oblivion the sins of the past. The knowledge which concerns man most to know is contained in the Bible; and he who has found this knowledge, and who has prized it as it should be, has found more than all the wealth of the world could purchase. He has found the pearl of great price—the one thing needful—the better part which cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. And in finding this he has got peace to his conscience, comfort to his heart, and life to his soul.

If the Bible is not from God, then He has not spoken at all, He has given us no revelation of his will, and we are left to grope in darkness, and to find the way as best we can. We are orphans, and the whole universe is to us a blank. Is this consistent with the God of love, with the Father of mercy? Away with such a thought! If the Bible is not from God, nothing is. If it contains not the wisdom of God, where, then, is it to be found? “The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me.” Are we, then, only beginning to discover, after the lapse of nearly six thousand years, that the Bible is not from God? No! Every year is only bringing us more convincing proofs that the Bible is not only the oldest, the bravest, and the best book in the world, but that it is the only book stamped with the seal of Divinity—emblazoned with the heraldry of heaven—redolent in every page with the imperishable truth of God. Oh, man, make this the pole-star of thy destiny! It is God’s light to thee, to guide in darkness; it is his comfort to thee for the time of sorrow. It is his counsel to thee for the time of perplexity. It is his strength to thee for the time of weakness. It is thy Father’s message to thee; wilt thou not hear it? wilt thou not prize it? wilt thou not search in this mine of richest treasure for the gold that will never grow dim—for the true riches that will never take to themselves wings and flee away?

LECTURE IX.

DESIGN AND DESTINY OF THE BIBLE.

Design : 1st. To unfold the character and purposes of God ; 2d. To exhibit the character, position, and prospects of man ; 3d. To make known the way of salvation ; 4th. To furnish an infallible rule of life ; 5th. To conduct to eternal happiness in heaven.—**Destiny :** Transitory nature of certain forms and embodiments of Christianity ; Permanent character of Divine truth ; Its trials and ultimate triumphs.

It has been stated, on good authority, that in this country alone about one thousand books are published every year. Probably the greater part of those books belong to the region of fiction. Some to poetry, history, science ; and others are consecrated to morals and religion. If on an average five hundred copies have been published of each of those books, then the press is annually furnishing this country with half a million of volumes, and placing at our command either good, bad, or indifferent reading. But all this is exclusive of the vast number of newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, and journals, that are constantly issuing from the press. From what different motives, and with what various designs, are those books and those periodicals published ! Many of them are brought forth in the deepest poverty, and cradled amid its bitterest tears ; baptised with the very sweat of the brain, that has been constantly racked with the pressure of want. Witness the "Rasselas" of Johnson, written to raise as much as would bury his mother ; or still more bitter, some have been baptised with the very blood of that heart which was written, but too legibly, on every page, as Pollok's "Course of

Time," or the touching strains of Michael Bruce, or Robert Nicoll, will ever attest. Others are written in the gay and airy chambers of wealth, and come forth upon the world decked and glittering, and bedizened with ornament, and from sheer absence of any heavy material like thought, succeed in sporting, like so many butterflies, their brief summer hour of life. Some are sent forth to enlighten, invigorate, and revive; others to darken, emasculate, and blight. Some are like the daring eagle, soaring aloft in the face of the sun; and others are like the sable and sinister bat, pursuing his erratic flight in shade and shame, and preferring the darkness rather than the light. Some are sent forth to add new grace and strength to the towering pillar of truth, whilst others, with soured and misanthropic aspect, utter the cry, "raze it, raze it unto the foundations thereof." Some are like the locusts of Egypt, darkening the land, and devouring the nutriment and the strength of virtuous principles, whilst others come forth like the strong west wind, to clear the land of such a plague. Some are like the dead frogs in Egypt, putrid and foul; others are the salt of the land, sweetening the moral atmosphere, and preventing the spread of corruption and disease. There is no book in the world to which we are more indebted for this sweetening and purifying influence than the Bible. It originated in the purest motives, for it is the word of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold sin, and who cannot look upon iniquity. It was not written for fame, for honour, or gold, for it is the word of Him to whom the silver and the gold and the cattle upon a thousand hills belong. It was not written to advance evil, but to promote good, for its Author is goodness itself. It was not written to corrupt, but to purify; not to weaken, but to make strong; not to extinguish the better feelings of our nature, but to develop and purify these in the advancing strength and fulness of spiritual life. Such is the magnificent design contemplated by the Bible, and all other books are permanently noble and important, and stamped with true greatness, only in so far as they are imbued with

its spirit and its truth, and tend to illustrate its high and holy aim.

And what is that? The present lecture is intended to be in some measure an answer to this inquiry.

1. The Bible is designed *to unfold the character and purposes of God*. That such a book was needed, no one can doubt, if he at all reflects upon the sad condition of the ancient or the modern heathen world, and upon the false views which have been entertained there regarding the Deity. A celebrated ancient author, who flourished about forty years before Christ, wrote a book concerning "the Nature of the Gods," which is still extant. Although Cicero himself, the author of that book, was a man greatly distinguished for his learning, and though he enjoyed access to the writings and the opinions of the wisest philosophers before his time, yet even from this vantage ground, namely, his own personal ability and acquirements, the access which he enjoyed to the opinions of all previous philosophers, he establishes scarcely anything, but spends his time in presenting the revolting and mis-shapen notions about God which were entertained by his predecessors; which opinions he endeavours to refute, without, however, advancing any of his own. It is very different, however, with the Bible. It is designed to reveal the one living and true God to man—the one eternal, self-existent "I Am that I Am," to dissipate the false notions of polytheism, and to lead men to the footstool of the one universal Lord and Father of all. Man, wherever he exists, instinctively feels that there is some superior power or object, which is to him God; and the Bible is designed to strengthen this religious feeling, natural to man, and which is the fundamental element in all religious homage, by revealing the Supreme Being in His true character—in *His true character*, because the revelation comes from himself. To know God, therefore, in all the moral excellency of His nature—His purity, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth—to know His purposes, so far as He has seen meet to reveal them to

our fallen race, you must turn to the Bible. It is only here that you can find just views of God, for it is here that He has spoken to man; and the views which other books express regarding His character and purposes, are only correct in so far as they have been taken from the Bible. It is here that His eternity, His unity, His immensity, His immutability, His omnipotence, His omniscience, in connection with all His moral attributes, such as holiness, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth, have been exhibited in legible and permanent characters; it is here that His purposes of matchless wisdom and boundless grace, His sovereign counsels of righteousness and truth, all flowing in the broad, deep channel of covenant arrangements, and terminating in untold and endless blessings, have been made known. True, indeed; even in reference to the most familiar and loving exhibitions of His character, and the most amiable, attractive, and glorious developments of His purposes, we know as yet but little; we see as yet but in part, and at best but a small part; but how incongruous and mis-shapen must all our conceptions of the character and purposes of Jehovah have been without the Bible? One great design of this book is to teach us, not only *that* He is, *but what* He is, and also that He is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him. With what deep interest, then, should you look upon this book, one great design of which is to reveal your Maker, your God, your Father, your hope, in all the dignity and moral loveliness of His character, and to make known to you not only His purposes regarding the race in general, but His thoughts of mercy, reaching back into the depths of eternity, and from that point stretching onwards, and terminating upon you. Where else shall knowledge like this be found?

2. The Bible is designed *to exhibit the character, position, and prospects of man*. "Know thyself," is a well known maxim of one of the ancient heathen philosophers; but it is impossible for man rightly to estimate his character or his

position in the sight of God, without the Bible. Men feel everywhere in a greater or less degree that they are sinners, that *sin*, or call it what you will, some distracting element, some root of bitterness, exists within them; in short, that there is something radically wrong, which they cannot put to rights; something terribly far out of joint which they cannot adjust. Where will you not find this instinctive feeling of the natural conscience in some form or other? Men feel everywhere, the savage as well as the sage, that in a moral point of view, and in so far as they stand related to a Supreme Being, there is something radically wrong; and hence the altar, the victim, and the priest, even amongst the most barbarous tribes of our race. The universal utterance of humanity in every age has been, "Something is far wrong, something must be done to put it right;" but what that wrong precisely is, and what that right precisely must be, man could never have discovered. Now, the Bible is designed to give God's interpretation to this universal feeling of unhappiness and disorder, and to furnish, as we shall see, the only remedy, because God's, for all this want of spiritual harmony and peace. It goes at once to the root of the evil, and tells man plainly what he is,—a transgressor of the Divine law, a rebel against the Divine government; it tells him plainly that he has forsaken the home of happiness and the Father of love; and has gone into the far country of sin, where he has lost all his moral dignity in a base and ruinous servitude, and spent all his strength on his own lusts—it tells him that he is a self-made alien, outcast, and wanderer from the spiritual family of God—and thus explains the wrong, the disorder, the unhappiness, the uneasy restlessness which man previously felt, but which he seemed willing and even anxious to trace to every cause but the right one. However revolting the Bible announcement may be to man, that he is a transgressor of the Divine law, and that on this very account he is at a distance from God, from happiness and peace, it is not at least inconsistent with what he has long felt, even when wholly uninstructed in Bible

truth. Such an announcement does not contradict the instinctive declarations of his own conscience, it only confirms and rightly interprets (if man could but see this) what his own conscience has felt and uttered even in a very agony of remorse and fear.

Whilst the Bible is thus designed to show man his character and his position in the sight of the great Supreme, it is also designed to reveal to him his prospects as to a future state of being.

"If death were nothing, and nought after death—
If, when men die, at once they ceased to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing,
From whence they sprung—then might the debauchee,
Untrembling, mouth the heavens—then might the drunkard
Reel over his full bowl, and when 'tis drained,
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh
At the poor bugbear death."

But the Bible invests man with immortality. It is the oldest book, and it is the first book that gave distinctness and certainty to what man felt *might be, should be*; but, regarding which, he could only at best express himself in the language of hope, or if it did at times reach to certainty, it more frequently degenerated into doubt and fear. The Bible was thus designed to give a right interpretation to man's own feelings, his own fears and hopes in connection with the past, the present, and the future—it was designed to answer such inquiries as these:—Whence am I? What am I? Bound whither?—and to unfold to man the awfully momentous truths—that he was sprung from a fallen race—that he was himself a sinner—that he was immortal, that a dread eternity was therefore before him, and a holy God, into whose presence he must come; and *then? what then?*—Man was thus roused to reflection—but all this might have driven him to despair, had the Bible not also been sent to breathe into his ear the still small voice of peace.

3. The Bible is designed to *make known the way of sal-*

vation to our fallen race. This may be said to be the one grand, all-pervading design of the Bible. Christ and salvation are its great themes. It finds man a fallen and a spiritually helpless being, at a distance from God, and involved in moral ruin and disorder; and it comes to him with the benevolent design of telling him how, and when, and where, he may find a physician for all his spiritual maladies, and a healing balm for all his wounds. It comes, not only to interpret aright the feeling of deep spiritual want which man has felt in every age, but it comes also with the benign intention of making known to man how this universally felt spiritual need of our being may be supplied. It lays open the deep wound, it exhibits the fearful disease of our nature, the wreck and the ruin of former greatness; but it does not leave matters in this state; for whilst it declares on the one hand, "O man, thou hast destroyed thyself," it gives the blessed assurance on the other, "but in Me is thy help." If it has dragged into the open sunlight of searching and unsparing truth the distracting and damning elements of sin, it has shed over all this chaos of moral disorder and wretchedness the light of the Sun of Righteousness, that has arisen with healing under his wings. If it is designed to reveal the ruin of our nature, its design is no less surely to make known to us that righteousness which is of God through faith that is in Christ Jesus, and by which we are invested with spiritual honour and glory, raised from the ruins of the Fall, and meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light. Sin, salvation,—ruin, righteousness,—penalty, pardon,—guilt, grace—paradise lost, paradise regained—the gulf of sin, the gateway to glory,—Satan's malignity, the Saviour's love,—form the awful verities on the one hand, and the glorious realities on the other, which the Bible was designed to disclose. From the first promise which brightens its opening pages, on to its last precept, its closing prediction, it points to Christ, and the way of salvation. If the shades of sin rest on many of its dark revelations—if the thunders of Sinai speak terror to the troubled spirit and the accusing

conscience of man—the light of life, of love, and hope, brightens its every page of gospel truth—the still small voice of peace, the soft under-tones of pleading mercy and pardoning love are heard yet, and will be heard till the end of time, as the sweetest vibrations of that heavenly music, which startled the ear of night so long ago on the plains of Bethlehem, “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and good-will towards men.”

The Bible was not designed to teach the arts or the sciences—to initiate us into the mysteries of painting, sculpture, poetry, or music—to instruct us in chemistry, geology, astronomy, or botany. Let it be observed, however, that whilst it was not given for this purpose, it contains nothing inconsistent with the profoundest discoveries of science; and this harmony is a striking proof in behalf of the inspiration of the Bible. But it was given to teach man the divinest of all arts,—the art of holy living; and the noblest of all sciences,—the knowledge of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer. If such be the design of this book, shall its study not be a matter as important as a question of life or death? If its design towards you is one altogether of mercy, what are your purposes regarding it for the future? Shall it have a more careful and prayerful study? Shall it be approached in a more devout and humble spirit? or shall it be treated with suspicion, with indifference, or absolute neglect? Whatever any one may think of the design of the Bible, surely its kindly intentions towards us may demand from every one, at least careful examination and reverential regard.

“The Hebrews never had schools of science, of rhetoric, or of philosophy. To the technical demands of these they do not respond. All their compositions have a higher end in view, than that of answering the demands of science or philosophy. The all-pervading element in them is that of religion and morality. To be eloquent, to be attractive, to be graceful or amusing in narration, seem never to have been objects distinctly before the minds of the Hebrew writers. To record what concerned the worship of

God, the religious state of his people, their chastisements and their blessings, and not unfrequently what concerned distinguished individuals among them; to say or to sing what would make the people wiser and better—these are the objects always before the minds of these peculiar writers. They have followed no models of writing among other nations. All that they have produced is of spontaneous growth. But is it not a vigorous one? Has it not borne much wholesome fruit? Has science, philosophy, rhetoric, the art of criticism—all scientific means and cultivation united—produced compositions of more power, and of higher perfection in their kind, than those of the Hebrews? I know of none. I know of no narrations that surpass in interest some of the Scriptural ones; no epics that make a deeper impression than the book of Job and the Apocalypse; no lyrics that exceed those of David and the sons of Korah; no preaching, no moral painting, more elevated, graphic, sublime, soul-stirring, than that which can be found in the prophets.”¹

4. The Bible is designed to *furnish man with an infallible rule of life*. Many books have attempted to do this in ancient and in modern times; but the attempt has proved a failure. It is not possible for man, apart from Divine revelation, to form an unexceptionable rule of life for himself. The ancient philosophers tried it, and failed; and modern philosophy followed in their wake, but did not succeed. The reason is, “the world by wisdom knew not God,” and man by wisdom did not know himself. All theories and systems that have been formed on the subject of morals, apart from the Bible, have proceeded for the most part on the false assumption, that human nature was sufficient to be a perfect rule of duty to itself—not knowing, or forgetting the Bible declaration regarding man in his unrenewed state, “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the

¹ Stuart on the Old Testament Canon.

blindness of their hearts." We need not wonder, then, if the wisest ancient philosophers directed their followers to find the rule of life, the standard of virtue, in such vague and indefinite notions as these:—"The mean or medium between two extremes," as if man could either determine the one or the other; "Living according to nature;" or again, "Making happiness or pleasure the great end of life;" filling the present with as much enjoyment as possible, without any regard to the future. Coming down to more modern times, we need not be surprised at other systems which have been advanced, when in the forming and supporting of these, that Bible declaration regarding man has been altogether forgotten or overlooked. This must have been sadly the case, or the standard of virtue would never have been resolved into "the eternal fitnesses of things," or degraded to a mere sordid utility, or based entirely upon selfish principles, or placed in the hands of the civil magistrate, so that what might be deemed virtue in one country, might be vice in another, according to the dictum of the chief ruler. But the Bible, rising above all these, resolves the rule of moral obligation into the will of God, and being itself a revelation to man of that will, it has furnished him with a perfect rule of life, in obedience to which he "will live soberly, righteously, and godly; he will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God." The Bible was thus designed to exhibit to man a fixed, permanent, and unexceptionable rule of life. Where will you find a better? Would man not be happy, wise, and good, were he yielding his affections and his life unreservedly to the control of the pure morality of the Bible? We need such a rule, amid the fluctuations of time, and the changing elements of opinion. "It is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path," amid the darkness of the present. What the chart and the compass are to the mariner upon the wide and stormy ocean, the Bible is to man upon the troubled sea of life. As a rule, it is permanent, certain, brief, holy, just, good, and *applicable to all*. It is the guiding star of man:—

"Star of eternity ! the only star
 By which the bark of man could navigate
 The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
 Securely ; only star which rose on Time,
 And, on its dark and troubled billows, still,
 As generation, drifting swiftly by,
 Succeeded generation, threw a ray
 Of heaven's own light, and to the hills of God,
 The eternal hills, pointed the sinner's eye."

It is related that one day a member of the French Academy went to see Diderot, one of the champions of infidelity. He found him explaining a chapter of the Gospel to his daughter very seriously, and with all the concern of a Christian parent. The member of the Academy expressed his surprise. "I understand you," said Diderot, "but, in truth, what better lesson could I give her?"

5. The Bible is designed to *guide man in the way of purity and peace in this world, and to conduct him to eternal happiness in heaven.* This book contains the revelation of a holy God, and must therefore be to man, notwithstanding the sneer of infidelity, the text-book of holiness, and the charter of peace. It was designed, as we have already seen, to reveal the character of God, and it has given great prominence to that holiness, which is a distinguishing attribute of the Divine Being. This essential purity of the Divine nature was unfolded in a most striking and appropriate manner to the ancient Israelites, shortly after they took their departure from the idolatrous land of Egypt, and when as yet there were no terms in their language to express the abstract idea of holiness. Such an idea, which could not well be expressed in words to a semi-barbarous people, was strikingly exhibited in symbols, such as the division of certain animals into clean and unclean, and the prohibition to partake of the latter—the numerous purifications which distinguished the former economy—these, and many similar appointments as these, were doubtless designed at first, whatever might be their ultimate reference, to teach the rude and unlettered forefathers of the

Hebrew nation the purity of their Maker, and still further to develop this feeling, that in purity alone there is peace.

When human language and human experience (speaking in the meantime of the Hebrew nation, for they alone for many ages possessed a Divine revelation) rendered it no longer necessary to convey the idea of holiness by means of symbols, the written word became more definite and full in its exhibitions of the purity of God. The aim of symbols (the only way of addressing the early Hebrews) was to wean them from the impure and corrupting influences of idolatry, and gradually to develop in their minds, not only the abstract idea, but the living and practical feeling of purity itself. If this was the design of the early symbols and rites of Judaism, surely it is no less the design of the pure, and simple, and sublime precepts of the Gospel, to raise man above the polluting influences of the world, the devil, and the flesh, and to beget in his soul the love and the peace of holiness, and a growing conformity to the moral image of God. This is the express design of the Bible, for its great Author hath said, "Be ye holy, as I am holy." This is the tendency of all its precepts,—if it threatens, if it warns, if it reproves, it does so only because this moral element is wanting in the soul of man—if it pleads with him, and promises and holds out bright prospects, it does so that it may win his soul to purity and peace. And whilst the Bible is thus designed to guide him in the way of holiness, it presents the strongest motives for the pursuit of this. The love of God, the example of Christ, the blessings of obedience, cannot but constrain the believing soul to depart from all iniquity; whilst the influence of the truth, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, cannot but secure this great end in the humble and obedient heart. Every sin forsaken, every evil habit overcome, every step in advance of former attainment, are just so many moral achievements by which our real happiness is increased, by which we experience a foretaste of that fulness of joy which the Bible has revealed, and to which it is designed to conduct.

“ Where’er an evil passion is subdued,
Or virtue’s feeble embers fann’d; where’er
A sin is heartily abjured, and left—
There is a high and holy place, a spot
Of sacred light, a most religious fane,
Where happiness descending sits and smiles.”

It is the design of the Bible, be assured, whatever you may hear to the contrary, to lead men in the way of holiness, true honour, and permanent peace. There is no real satisfying peace but in purity of heart. *Holiness is happiness, purity is peace.* Suppose there were no hereafter, still the Bible presents you with the most desirable life for the present world; for its direct tendency is to promote your social happiness and peace. But it does not stop here—it does not conduct you to the grave and leave you there—if it has led you in the way of purity and peace in this world, it has done so that it may conduct you to eternal happiness in another and a better. It will support you amid all the sorrows and the trials of life, adding, as you advance, new graces to your character, and giving to your soul new elements of hope, and peace, and joy. Clinging to Bible truth, it will lead you in safety to the verge of time; and when it has made you all that God designed its truth and his grace should make you on this side the grave, it will not leave you, when you have most need of its sustaining truths,—it will not forsake you in the hour of death, in the prospect of eternity—it will not—no—it will not prove a deceiver when you have most need of a friend. Your sum of long cherished hopes will not go down in darkness—it will not desert you when the last enemy comes, but on the downy pinions of its promises, prospects, and consolations, your parted spirit shall soar away to the regions of eternal light and glory, and unfading spring.

All this the Bible has been designed to do for you. Can you think of it lightly? What benevolent! what magnificent! what glorious designs are these!

Oh, man! what ails thee at the Bible? Does it not come

to thee with loving intentions, with godlike designs? What book will bless thee so much as the Bible? what book will tell thee so much? Ah! perhaps it tells thee too much. Be honest. Does it not? Is not this the reason why many regard it with suspicion, if not with absolute contempt?

What ails thee, O man! at the Bible? Have not the greatest intellects bowed before the majesty of its glorious truths, and felt more enraptured as they comprehended the vastness of its designs, than they ever did with all the discoveries of science, with all the beauties of literature, with all the achievements of art? Newton turned his gaze from the starry heavens to bow before the splendour of the bright and morning Star. Locke, the profound, the acute metaphysician, turned from his dry and husky region of thought, to sun his soul in the light of Divine truth, and pluck the verdant boughs from the tree of life, that grows fast by the river of God. The great Samuel Johnson, a giant in mind and body, sat like a little child, or like Mary in Bethany, at the feet of Jesus, that he might learn the words of eternal life.

O man, what ails thee at the Bible? Its magnificent designs demand thy attentive regard. Bible truth is the lever that is to raise our world from the ruins of the Fall. The Bible is designed to do this; and nothing else apart from, or altogether independent of, the Bible, will do it. But why has the design of the Bible not been accomplished? Why has the Bible not achieved its mighty purposes? Has it proved a failure? Have these only been the hallucinations of a heated brain? No! Wait! the times and the seasons are in God's hands. Its vast designs are gradually unfolding themselves. It has done much, but it will yet do vastly more, and the whole world, blessed by its truth, shall be convinced that "it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter." The whole world shall yet feel the truth of what the poet has so beautifully sung:—

"This book, this holy book, on every line
Marked with the seal of high divinity.

On every leaf bedewed with drops of love
Divine, and with th' eternal heraldry
And signature of God Almighty stamped
From first to last—this ray of sacred light,
This lamp from off the everlasting throne,
Mercy took down, and in the night of Time
Stood, casting on the dark her gracious bow,
And evermore beseeching men with tears
And earnest sighs, to hear, believe, and live."

Such, then, is the godlike design of this book ; what is the destiny which awaits it ? Shall man, amid the sins and struggles of earth, ever outgrow his need of the Bible ? Shall its gracious design, so far as he is concerned, be useless, and of no avail ? Shall the time ever come, in the progress of events, in the lapse of ages, in the onward march of art and science, when the Bible shall be superseded altogether by clearer light and higher truth, and man may say once more of the present dispensation, succeeded by a better, "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth ?" Those who imagine that man will ever outgrow his need of the Bible upon earth, have formed altogether mistaken notions, both of its contents, and of the nature of man. There may be no need for the written word in heaven, but man will never be able to do without it upon earth. Existing forms and embodiments of Christianity, the merely human in creed, in dogma, in system and polity, will doubtless during the lapse of ages disappear, but the Bible, the *permanent, the real, the absolutely needful in Christianity*, which will be as much required by the generation of a thousand years hence as it is at this moment, will never disappear. Existing sects and party names may become unknown,—and of many, yea, of all these but that of "Christian," who would not say, The sooner the better ?—but the Christianity of the New Testament, with Christ as its founder and its head, must ever endure, must ever march onward, through good and through bad report, through honour and dishonour, through scorn and contumely, conquering and to conquer, proving herself to be, as she doubtless ultimately will, the friend and the healer of

man. He will never outgrow the need of the Bible. He will never be able in truth to say of it, as he may of the days of childhood, "When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." He may have pride and folly enough to say this of the Bible, but if he knows himself aright, he will feel that he cannot outgrow his need of this book. His nature and his necessities are ever the same, and will ever require the same spiritual appliances. The nations will doubtless become more enlightened. Education, and other humanising influences, will doubtless make rapid strides in the future. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Men in general shall doubtless awaken to a true sense of their dignity; but even granting that all these improving influences, "in the good time coming," shall greatly bless the whole family of man, yet it is very evident, if we judge of the future from the past, that these influences can only increase in the same ratio as Bible truth advances, and leavens society at large. Have men, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, outgrown their need of the Bible? do they not require it now as much as ever? and is it not now just as much adapted to the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the young and the old, as it was to the Ethiopian eunuch, or Lydia the seller of purple, or Luke the physician, or Onesimus the slave, or the youth Timothy, or Mnason the aged disciple? This is the last dispensation of truth, and it will be adapted to men till the end of time. It is vain to look for new truths better adapted to the spiritual necessities of universal man, than those which have been already given. The inner and the outer life of man require no higher truths than these, in order to produce that harmony which is still wanting in his moral nature. That nature will ever be the same; and the truth which has affected it for good in times that are past, will be employed for the same purpose till the end of time. Doubtless the same truths may be presented in new lights, in new combinations, in more attractive forms of beauty, as the Bible is better under-

stood, and as art and science become the handmaids of the truth itself; but the truths which are to change man's spiritual inner life will ever remain essentially the same—the shell, the mere form in which the truth has been embodied, may be broken up and dissolved, and so much the better, if men can thereby more surely get at the kernel—at the truth which is to satisfy hungry souls in every age: the former is human, and may pass away; the latter is divine, and endureth for ever.

The Bible, however, has still to undergo a severe ordeal, even in this country—the furnace is already heated through which it is to pass—and heated seven times by superstition, doubt, scepticism, and pride of intellect without God. The fair column of truth that has risen so stately and beautiful in the eyes of many is threatened to be overturned. But however protracted and severe this trial may be, we are assured of this, that whilst the merely human and artificial, the merely formal and traditional, may perish in the process—and the sooner the better—that which is of God, and for man, for his deep and unchangeable necessities, will only be rendered more bright, stable, majestic, and pure; whilst they who cast it into what they deemed the devouring crucible, when they behold it come out like gold seven times purified, *stripped of the human, but glorified with the divine*, shall be constrained to say, “This is of God and not of man; this is not of the earth, earthy; this surely cometh from above.”

In the meantime, who cannot but feel anxious solicitude for the young, the wavering, and the formal? “To your tents, O Israel!” to your Bible, and your God. Surely the blessings of the one are worth preserving, and the favour of the other is beyond all price. Surely there is much in the Bible that you would hold fast as the dearest treasure of your lives. But if ye are not watchful, ye may be speedily and in an evil hour deprived of this. There has seldom or ever been a time when a careful and prayerful study of the word of God was more required, and this more especially on the part of the young, than at this moment. Forms of error

are ripe ; a testing time has come ; and when the Bible is assailed, exhausted of all vital energy, reduced to a very skeleton in the process of rationalistic refinement, or ground to powder and scattered to the winds on the thrashing-floor of a cruel atheism, let your appeal to the spoiler be this :— “ What will you give us in return for this book ? We cannot do without it. Whatever you may do to others, you will at least spare us our Bible ; for when we felt the weary burden of sin, it lightened us of that ; when we were in darkness, it brought us light ; when we were in sorrow, it brought us comfort ; when we were bereaved, it stood our constant sympathising friend ; and whatever you may say, you must not ask us to belie and outrage our own consciousness ; we cannot disown our own experience, and we must still be permitted, notwithstanding all the imperfections you allege against the Bible, to prefer it as a guide rather than to be without one ; to prefer a God to no God, a Saviour to no Saviour, immortality to annihilation, the light of coming glory to the eternal darkness of the grave. We will rather link our destiny to the hopes of the Bible ; and if these shall be realised, as we confidently anticipate they will, the result will be our unspeakable gain ; but if not, the anticipation has at least been to us present enjoyment, whilst at the last we cannot fare worse than yourselves. But this we do know, the Bible has been our friend, and we will not part with it till we know of a better, and we cannot but think that if you knew it better, you would love it more. At all events, rather ask us to resign any other thing—our property, our life, our all, than belie our own experience, outrage our own consciousness, make shipwreck of our faith, and disown the Bible, which has hitherto been our best friend.”

LECTURE X.

DIVINE ADAPTATION.

Adaptation is alike manifest in nature and revelation. 1st. The Bible adapted to man as a progressively intelligent being; 2d. As a transgressor of the Divine law; 3d. As the child of sorrow; 4th. As the heir of immortality.

WHEREVER you look abroad upon the material world, you cannot fail to perceive abundant proofs of design, and at the same time an all-wise and perfect adaptation pervading all the different provinces of nature. Whether you examine the structure of animal bodies or that of vegetables, there is a striking adaptation in every part to the end for which it has been made. In proof of this you require not to go beyond the range of your own bodies. The eye and the ear will themselves furnish, not only abundant evidence of design, but of wondrous adaptation to the benevolent purpose for which they were formed. The organ of vision, and the light which it receives, have been wondrously adapted to each other. Had light been a less ethereal fluid than it is, how painful must it have been to the tender mechanism of the eye! Now all nature, in her minutest and grandest exhibitions of creative energy, is pervaded by this ceaselessly operating principle of adaptation, manifested in every joint, and limb, and member—in every trunk, and stem, and branch, and leaf, and flower. It is seen in the worm as well as in the elephant—in the summer insect that sports its brief hour in sunshine, and then folds its gossamer wings in the darkness of death, as well as in the eagle that dwelleth in the clefts of

the rock, that soareth aloft, and gazeth upon the sun, and groweth bald with age. The fish in the water, the fowl in the air, the mole burrowing in the darkness of the earth, and the lark singing far away up among the fleecy clouds—the water lily and the towering cedar, all exhibit a most wondrous adaptation, in point of structure, to the various spheres and elements in which they have been destined to live. All this furnishes not only a striking proof of the existence of a Supreme Being, but of his wisdom, goodness, and power.

Apply this test of adaptation to the sacred volume. If this is a Divine revelation—if it contains spiritual light from above, surely it is reasonable to conclude that it shall be as much adapted to the spiritual condition of man as light is to the eye, or the vibrations of the atmosphere are to the ear, and that the law of adaptation will be found as legibly impressed upon the pages of this book, as upon the many-leaved book of nature, all glowing with the living warmth of inextinguishable Divinity.

1. The Bible is adapted *to man as a progressively intelligent being*. He is bound to exercise his reasoning faculties to the utmost in all his researches after truth, and especially in connection with the all-important statements of this book. It does not come to man, demanding from him a blind, superstitious credence in the truths which it reveals, but a belief founded upon conviction, as the result of personal experience and reasonable inquiry. It regards man as endowed with reason, and therefore expects him to use it in the examination of its claims. And where will the intellectual faculties of man find such varied, sublime, and ennobling themes as in the Bible? There is every possible theme here that is calculated to expand and strengthen the intellect and purify the heart. There is no book that has ever presented to the mind of man such an unlimited range of contemplation, ascending from the minute to the infinite, till the most daring imagination is lost and wearied in its upward flights; for the revelation of God embraces the past, the present, and the

future—the whole universe of mind and matter—all time and all eternity—and urges all intellect with which it comes into contact to come forth from the deep night of ignorance into the dazzling sunlight of truth, into the illimitable fields of knowledge, and pluck from every tree and flower, and drink from every fountain, in the garden of heavenly wisdom.

The Bible is thus adapted to man as a progressively intelligent being. It contains narratives, touching, tender, pathetic, that can stir the deepest emotions in the soul of childhood—truths for the matured intellect, before the majesty of which the most gifted of our race have bowed with profound reverence—and sublime revelations, into which even the highest angels desire to look with adoring wonder. The Bible has its flowery lawns, its murmuring brooks, for the feet and the ear of childhood, on the banks of which the sacred harper sings his pleasant song, and the aged historian tells his sacred tale; and the Bible has Alpine heights, lost amid the clouds, to woo the daring pilgrim, singing as he ascends,—

“Higher, higher we shall climb,
Up the hill of glory,”—

and oceans that have never yet been fathomed, on whose deep waters rest the dark shadows of lofty mountains that tower aloft far beyond the reach of mortal vision, reflecting from their summits the sunshine of heaven, and flashing afar the light of eternal day. Such is the Bible, meeting man at every stage of his intellectual progress on earth or in heaven, and pointing him still onwards to higher attainments in honour, glory, and immortality.

Surely, then, it must be a very mistaken notion for any one to suppose that it can possibly be the patron of ignorance. Its whole spirit tends directly to mental cultivation—to a vigorous work of enlightenment, as alike necessary to social happiness and the healthy growth of its own principles. It regards every member of the human family as gifted with mind

capable in all of indefinite expansion and improvement, and denounces everything which tends to shrivel and debase the noble faculties of the soul. Ignorance is, in the estimation of this book, a soul-debasing curse to any people. "Keep the people in darkness, and Christianity and despotism will have nothing to fear from popular innovation: Ignorance is the mother of devotion!"—are maxims which, however favourable they may be to the black reign of terror and superstition, are certainly the very opposite to the spirit of the Bible. Christianity, as taught here, comes before us as an angel of mercy, herself descending from the realms of light and clearest vision, to stir the waters of healing, and lead the maimed, the halt, and the blind, to the exhaustless fountain of her own truth. "Get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding. "That the soul be without knowledge is not good." "Where there is no vision, the people perish." "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times." "Search the Scriptures." "Prove all things." These are a few statements in the language of the Bible, expressive of its own earnestness for mental cultivation—for the universal diffusion of mental liberty and light; and wherever the precepts of this book are known and practised, men are truly enlightened, powerful, and free. What has it got to do with ignorance, but to dispel it for ever? The Bible comes to man as the renovating spirit of knowledge, that will move upon the deep, dark waters of a benighted world, and bring light out of darkness, and order and beauty out of chaos. Christianity is light. Her own Author is light. He is the light of the world. The Spirit is the eternal Spirit of light; and God over all, blessed for ever, is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. What communion, then, hath light with darkness? Let but a man imbibe the spirit of this book, and "*light! more light!*" will be the urgent feeling of his nature.

2. The Bible is adapted to man as a transgressor of the

Divine law. Man in every age, account for it as you will, has felt himself to be a transgressor, exposed to retribution, with his whole moral nature out of harmony; and he has tried every expedient, but in vain, to allay the fears of guilt, to silence the voice of conscience, to obtain spiritual peace—the sweet conviction that his sins are forgiven, that the wide gulf which sin had created between himself and his Maker is filled up, and that he is no longer an outcast and an alien, but a wanderer restored to former unity, dignity, and peace. Now, apart altogether from the declarations of the Bible upon such a subject as this, it is a fact that men in all ages have felt themselves to be guilty. The blood-stained altar, in every age and amongst every people where the Bible was unknown, bears witness to this. Man has therefore longed more or less for spiritual repose in every age. And shall there be a time of rest for everything in nature but man? Shall the weary waves of ocean that have chafed themselves to wrath, be laid to rest on the lap of the silent shore? Shall the weary bird, at the close of day, fold its downy pinions, and, hushed by the breath of evening, sink to rest? And shall there be no peace to the troubled soul of man from the fears of guilt, when he becomes conscious of the dignity which he has lost, and the deep wants of his spiritual nature? Shall there be everything adapted to supply man's every physical want, and shall there be nothing to meet the pressing wants of his spiritual life? "Man shall not live by bread alone." That may do for the sustenance of his physical life; but he requires something vastly different from this to supply the urgent wants of his soul. He has sins to be forgiven—he has a depraved nature to be renewed. "The whole head is sick—the whole heart is faint." Where is the healing for his spiritual maladies? Where is the balm for his wounded spirit? Where is the physician that can pluck up his deep sorrows by the root, that can "minister to a mind diseased," and give him peace? It is in vain that he looks to external nature. He is but lost in the magnificence, the grandeur, the vastness of the material universe; and

amid the roll of oceans, the onward sweep of mighty rivers, the dash of cataracts, the hoarse murmur of the winds, the change of seasons, the revolutions of worlds, he perceives indeed the operations of omnipotence, wisdom, and love ; but there is nothing in all the varied aspects of nature—in the terrible, the soothing, the beautiful, the grand, in the mountain, in the flood, in the earth, or in the firmament—nothing in the profoundest research into all these that can tell him how the sin-created gulf between God and man can be filled up—nothing that can soothe the fears of man's spiritual nature—supply its deep wants, and restore the unity, the harmony, the dignity that have been lost. The wonders of all created worlds, combined and made to pass before us, cannot lift up the dark vail which shrouds in mystery the destiny of man—the voice of a sin-pardoning God that speaketh peace to the guilty conscience, is not heard amid the harmonies of external nature—the foot-prints of mercy hastening to pluck the sinner as a brand from the burning, are not seen on the mountain top, or on the green valleys of earth, or on any page of the vast book of creation. “The Lord is not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the still small voice.” And where is this to be heard? Even in the first promise made in Paradise, which threw a mellowing radiance over the darkness of the Fall, and was sweetly echoed in every succeeding promise and prediction, till it burst forth in the full, unrestrained melody of heaven, the angelic anthem on the plains of Bethlehem, and afterwards interpreted by the Saviour of the world in these words of his own, which form the essence of gospel truth: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost, and to give his life a ransom for many ;” for “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Here, then, is the healing balm which the spiritual necessities of men require, and the Physician that he needs. Christianity enters into conflict with man, but it is a conflict of love. She tells him of his sins—his grievous departure from

God. She weeps over his fall, but there is joy in her tears ; for she is not only commissioned to reveal the depths of the sinner's spiritual misery, but to point him to One mighty to save, who stretches a helping hand over the wide gulf of sin, and whose voice is heard over the dark and angry waters that roll between : " Peace, be still ! " " Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. " Promises such as these—stream down direct to us from the throne of mercy—they meet us on every page—their light is beaming upon us even in the darkest hour of sin, " for there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, and plenteous redemption that He may be sought unto. "

3. The Bible is adapted *to man as the child of sorrow*. There is not one of our race entirely free from trouble or pain, struggle or sorrow, of some kind or another. There are thorns in the downy pillow—in the velvet couch of ease—as well as in the pallet of straw, and the homely settle beneath the roof-tree of the humblest dwelling. All are not alike tried, but all are tried in some form or another. Some have drunk to madness the bitter cup of suffering, and in the frenzy of despair " are glad to be hurled anywhere—anywhere out of the world. " No circle of human hearts, however small, select, retired, and propitiously circumstanced the companionship may be, however cemented by friendship and kindred sympathies, is secure against the invasions of deep sorrow, or can remain long in this evil world a stranger to that grief which drinketh up the spirits. Suffering is so common, and its invasion into the happiest circles at times so sudden, that we are often inclined to regard our hours of highest enjoyment as only the prelude to proportionate distress. The portentous thoughts of coming tribulation often embitter present enjoyment, and not unfrequently does the voice of fear whisper to us, in the midst of all that is bright and fair in human existence, that it is too sweet, too good, to last. Life is a battle-field, and not a play-ground—it is a struggle in which many friends, and it may be foes, are

falling around us. We have but scarcely time to bury the dead, or speak a word of pity to the wounded and the dying, for the ceaseless onward pressure of life's many cares and life's many sorrows; and forward still have we to march, and work, and fight, and oftentimes in very deepest agony of spirit, with aching heart and fevered brow, and frenzied brain, till we also shall fall on the battle-field of life, and finish our course in that warfare from which there is no discharge, and lay down our arms to that enemy to whom all must surrender, and on his own domains, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

But why enlarge upon such a theme as this? All know their own miseries, and all surely are wretched enough. We feel these sorrows—the bitterness of life—without being told them. Is there any healing balm for these sore wounds of humanity? Is there any peace amid these fightings from within and from without? Is there any lucid interval amid the struggle of life? Is there any repose to the troubled soul of man? Nature is kindly and constant, and ever-soothing; literature, and art and science, have their respective charms;—but even these will fail at times to bear the pressure of sorrow; and alas! what will the best of them do for man in the dark valley of the shadow of death? Is there nothing therefore adapted to man as a child of suffering, walking daily in the midst of trouble? There is. Man is imprisoned, and tossed upon the stormy ocean of life; and the Bible is God's Dove of Peace, that comes over the dark and the stormy waters with good tidings, and tells him of dry land elsewhere, and springing flowers, where he may find rest for the sole of his foot—peace for his troubled spirit—a healing balm for every wound, and the hand of a friend to lave his burning brow with the waters of life.

The Bible is not by any means a book of dry technicalities, or barren and repulsive dogmas—far from it. It appeals to the heart, the sympathies of man, as well as to his intellect. It does not even come to us so much in the rigid and formal

character of an instructor as a friend. It does not merely expose our wants,—our sore diseases—neither does it prescribe to us merely what we need, but it brings home to our bosoms the very thing that we need itself. There is a balm in Gilead,—there is a physician there. The Bible is not merely profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; but it comes to us with kind looks, kind words, and a kind heart. It is our friend by day and by night, in joy and in sorrow, in sunshine and in shower, in summer and in winter, in the mart of business and in the solitude of life. The seasons change, and hearts and homes change, but the generous, warm sympathies of God's book for man and all that concerns him change not. Friends depart—the fountain of earthly affection dries up; but the word of the Lord, in all its adaptation of cheering promise, sustaining hope, fervid assurance, and brightening prospect, endureth for ever.

Such an argument as this in behalf of the Bible can only be fully appreciated by those who have really felt the precious adaptation of Bible truth to their spiritual necessities, and to their every circumstance of trial and change; but nevertheless the infidel, whilst he cannot experimentally feel the force of such an argument, because not under the influence of Bible truth, may still be prepared to listen with deference at least to the sober and hallowed experience of others, and infer as much from this, that surely there must be a sustaining and consoling power in the truths of this book, and that after all, his want of interest in it may arise from his defective spiritual vision, just as the blind man's want of interest in the most beautiful landscape arises wholly from his want of sight. But surely the statements of thousands who have gazed with intensest rapture on these beauties, cannot fail to assure him of the loveliness of that landscape, and beget in him the fond wish to gaze upon it too. And no less surely may the rapturous statements of thousands in almost every age,—the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, who have loved and studied this book, and have discovered

its adaptation to their urgent wants, who have found it a rich treasure in adversity, a precious medicine in sickness, and a comforter at least amid the many ills to which flesh is heir. Surely such experience as this, which has been that of many thousands, and which multitudes at this moment, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, are able to attest, might convince the gainsayer of this, at least, that this book unfolds scenes of surpassing loveliness, and opens up bright visions, which, if he cannot see, it must surely proceed from his want of that spiritual vision by which spiritual things are discerned. And surely the happy experience of others who have drunk deeply of life's bitterest draughts, and have felt at the same time that this word was their comfort in affliction, might at least beget in him the strong desire that he might be comforted with the same consolations, and made glad with the same hopes.

Assuming, then, that the blind man will patiently hear the beauties of a landscape described, and that the gainsayer of Bible truth will listen to the experience of those who have felt its power, I shall submit a few scriptural truths, which cannot fail, if believed, to sustain the soul of man in the midst of trial, and thus prove the adaptation of the Bible to his necessities as a child of sorrow.

From the vast treasury of rich and enduring blessings which the Bible throws open to all believers, I would select two bright, sparkling gems of truth, which, if carried about with you every day, and more especially in the time of trouble, will make you rich, and will shed the light of the upper sanctuary over the darkest day of suffering. From the Tree of Life, covered with the eternal fruits of Faith, Hope, and Charity, springing from the love and faithfulness of Jehovah, I would pluck two boughs blooming ever fresh, laden with the ripe fruit of God's paradise, and shedding their fragrance on the believer's path through life. The two truths to which I refer are these:—

1. The paternity of God, or the fatherly character in which He is represented in the Bible.

2. Christ's own experience of suffering as the Divine Man, and his tender sympathy for his afflicted people.

The paternal character of God is not a delusion, neither is the relation in which his people stand to Him as his children an imaginary one. "I will be unto you a father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord," are the words which confirm this character and this relation. And what does such a relation on the part of God imply? Does it not imply all this at least,—love, faithfulness, tender solicitude, constant providing care and chastisement, mercifully adapted to the circumstances of every member in his spiritual family? He is the Father of our spirits, and when He bruises the body, when his hand is laid heavily upon us, when our moisture is turned into the drought of summer, all this is the work of mercy, the reluctant yet needful labour of love, that He may heal the maladies of our soul, and bring us nearer to himself. "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? for they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Is not such a truth as this far more consonant with our nature, than the desperate conclusion, that we are all orphans, and that nature herself is but a splendid mockery of all our hopes and fears?

Now look at the influence which such a truth must necessarily have on the mind of the man who believes it. His worldly circumstances may not be at all comfortable or promising; there may be many harassing anxieties connected with these. What then? Will he give up in despair? or will he fanatically leave all to God and do nothing himself? No; he will bring the strength, the energy, the discretion of Christian principle to bear upon his position in life, whatever it may be; he will do his best as an honest, industrious Christian; and he will go to his God and Father and seek and expect that blessing which is promised upon

every honest, earnest effort that is put forth. Labour and supplication, painstaking and prayer, must ever go together; and when a Christian man unites these, as he will do, he may peacefully prosecute his worldly calling, in the assurance that honest labour and earnest effort will not be in vain.

Does the day of adversity come? Is he left destitute? Is he bereaved? Has his nearest earthly friend been taken away? Still in the dark and cloudy day of sorrow he is not left comfortless; he is not abandoned to the forlorn wretchedness of a cold-blooded stoicism, or the desperate conclusions of a dark infidelity; but there is light for him in darkness, and joy for him in sorrow, and when other props give way, and the world proves but a miserable comforter, he can stay himself upon his God, and trace his trials as well as his mercies to His fatherly hand. The state of the world—the events which the wheel of time is ever evolving in the great drama of human history, may often seem untoward and altogether opposed to the best interests of man, and the reign of truth, and love, and peace; but the Bible assurance is, “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,” and though clouds and darkness are round about Him to our apprehension, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

For the sake of more particular illustration, take two families: both are alike in rank; and in outward circumstances precisely the same. They only differ in this, the Bible is loved by the one—by the other it is neglected. What then? A time of suffering comes to both. Death enters the two dwellings at the same time. The dearest member in the family is removed. The one is in darkness, the darkness of doubt or of positive despair; the other has the light of hope, of promise, and of peace. The one sees nothing beyond the grave, or has no comfort in the thought of eternity. Sudden calamity has struck it dumb and powerless. God’s purposes are only seen as a hard and inexorable necessity—the present life a blind and random fatalism, and the destiny of man unmeaning and sad. For, standing at the side of the grave, infidelity hears not the

music of the blest, nor sees the glories of another world. It cannot soar upon the wings of faith, nor sun itself in the light of the beatific vision. The other looks at the grave as the threshold of glory—eternity as the consummation of all bliss, and bows in filial submission to the chastisement of a kind and heavenly father. The present life is regarded as a scene of probation, and faithfulness in trial as the prelude to future triumph and everlasting glory.

Take two families sunk in deep poverty at a time of commercial depression—there is only this difference between them: the one has loved the Bible—still loves it, the other does not—never did. What then? The time may be one of “pikes, brick-bats, and conflagrations”—what family shall you find upon the side of order and true liberty? The records of our country will bear witness to this, that the poor but God-fearing family are orderly and patient at such a time; and though much provoked, they are peaceful, for they serve the God of peace; though valiant (yes, how much true heroism is found in such a family!), they are not violent and vengeful; though troubled, they are not troublers; and if they will speak and act at such a time, they will do so as men who think as patriots who have a cause at heart, and as Christians who feel that their Master’s honour is at stake.

Another consideration to which I referred as investing the Bible with peculiar suitableness to man as a sufferer, is the personal experience which the Saviour had of suffering himself “in the days of his flesh,” and the tender sympathy which He still feels for his afflicted people. There is no trial which we can be called to endure, but the Bible presents us with a divine companion in sorrow, who has trod the path of suffering before us, and who is still present, not to suffer, but to comfort and sustain. “He was made perfect through sufferings.” There are many fellow-sufferers in the way, but it is the consciousness that the divine Man of Sorrows suffered before us, and is still with us, that sustains the Christian pilgrim on his way to a better land. If any peculiar calamity

has befallen us, we naturally betake ourselves to any one who has suffered in a similar way. But this is not always found, and even when it is, it cannot measure the depth of our wants, nor meet the demands of all our trials. But every pang which we feel was felt by the Saviour, and every trial which we can endure was experienced by Him, for He was in all points tempted like as we are, and He is able to succour them that are tempted. He suffered, not only that He might destroy the cause of suffering—sin, but that He might be the divine companion and elder brother of all his suffering people.

The hearty reception of these truths brings you blessings that will run like a golden thread through the chequered web of life, or like a pleasant, refreshing, and sweetly musical stream, accompanying your path through this vale of tears.

I mention these two truths not as by any means including all the consolations of the Bible, but only as a specimen of the exceeding abundant riches of that grace and comfort which the God of consolation has poured into his own word. They are but, as it were, one sparkling gem selected from the bright thousands that adorn the pages of this book; one bough from the tree of life, whose fruit is for the healing of the nations; one drop from that full flowing river, which makes glad the city of our God.

I admit at once that any man, who has been accustomed to regulate his life on the principles of self-reliance and self-control, will be able to adapt himself oftentimes with remarkable facility to the various trials of life. A man who has been accustomed to act on these noble principles will find himself, even when suddenly plunged into the depths of adversity, rising with the occasion. But at the same time, the man who has drilled and disciplined himself most fully on the principles of self-reliance and self-control, though rising with the occasion which demands fortitude, self-denial, and earnest indomitable resolution and perseverance, and though experiencing a certain strength for the occasion, yet it is not possible for him to possess the

comfort, the peace, the brightening hopes of that man whose mind is fully imbued with Divine truth. The one has the strength which earthly philosophy can evoke, when she falls back upon the latent powers in man as a rational and a moral agent. In some stalwart minds such strength may even stand a heavy pressure and a severe tension, but at the best it is a strength which is but weakness compared with that which Christian truth and motives can supply. On the other hand, Christianity brings out and develops all the hidden strength of principle in man; it supplies motives for patience, obedience, self-denial, moral heroism, and it brings the strength thus developed into immediate contact with the strength of God. The man who is tutored in self-denial has the strength, the support, which the *crutch* gives to the lame man; the man who stays himself upon God, who regards Him as his heavenly Father, has the strength, the support, which one friend feels when he relies upon the sympathies and leans upon the supporting arm of another, when sickness or sorrow makes his help a double blessing. Would you not a thousand times prefer the warm sympathies, the supporting arm, of a friend in the time of trouble, to the solitary, mechanical, and unfeeling aid of a *crutch*?

I do not for one moment mean to say that the fact of a man's being a believer will ever supersede the use of earnest and well-directed effort for an honourable subsistence, or bring food and clothing miraculously into any dwelling. Earnest work, healthy action, is but the practical embodiment of Christianity; and I do claim for it this proud distinction, that it furnishes to the man who has embraced it such an amount of spiritual strength and comfort, by means of which he is certainly better able to weather the storms of adversity, and to meet and endure the varied trials of life, than the man who only relies upon his own resources, whether these are earthly friendship, stoical indifference, worldly wisdom, philosophy, or art. The Christian religion will not bring exemption from the ills of life, but assuredly it will greatly

soften and subdue them. The man who has embraced it as his faith, is doubtless exposed to these ills in common with other men ; but however much his worldly prospects may be damaged by the changes of time and the fluctuations of commerce, he has treasures that cannot be touched ; though the whole commercial world should become bankrupt, he has hopes and sweet experiences that cannot be taken away, for they are connected with his inner spiritual life, which God begins and perfects, and, like himself, the blessings connected with it endure for ever.

4. The Bible is adapted *to man as the heir of immortality*.—The feeling of immortality is inwrought, so to speak, in the very nature of man—a feeling of which he cannot, even if he would, very easily divest himself in his moments of calm and sober reflection. The fact of immortality may be forgotten, and man may live as if “death were nothing, and nothing after death ;” but there are, doubtless, moments in the history of every individual when the soul asserts its own dignity, and speaks in behalf of its own immortality. The faint, floating notes of some snatch of a sweet melody of the olden time, chanted perhaps in the days of childhood by the soothing voice of a departed mother, will, if but casually heard in town or country, in crowded street or rural alley, call up the old haunts and “the old familiar faces,” however long forgotten they may have been, and flood the most reckless and hardened spirit with a deep-gushing tide of tenderness, breaking up for a time the worldliness and the selfishness of our nature, and passing through one’s soul like the purifying storm or the fresh mountain breath of a summer’s eve. Thoughts of the bygone happy hours and happy faces lie deeply buried in the breast of every man, even it may be in the veriest profligate—but *they are there*—long forgotten, perhaps, or if shooting across the surface of life, at times but little heeded ; till the magic wand of memory, or the melting melody of some old song that floated around the home of childhood, calls up, with all the vividness of present reality, scenes and incidents,

and thoughts, that seemed long buried in oblivion, but once recalled, live within us as if no distance had ever intervened between the hour that is and the happy hours that have long since passed away. And so is it with the conception of immortality, or a future state of being. It may be overlooked, forgotten, or even quenched at times, but nevertheless it is deeply rooted in the consciousness of every man. The feeling may slumber, it may even in some cases seem altogether dead—but it is there—to be awakened even by the varied looks and loveliness of external nature; by the favourite flowers or bursting buds of Spring; by the towering mountain, clothing itself once more up to its very summit in the green mantle of the opening year, when the breath of God renews the face of the earth; by the golden radiance of the setting sun flashing the hope of immortality on the twilight of the departing summer's day; by the silvery light of the evening star, as seen on some pensive gloaming in autumn, when the fields are tinged with its mellow hues, and the "sear and yellow leaf" falls mournfully rustling from the tree; by the great arms of the milky way that seem to point to the throne of the Eternal One, calling for more light, that man may see the destiny that lies before him; by the open star-gemmed face of the wintry sky, when the sighing winds that had long been the "lullaby" of our weary earth, breathe decay, and yet whisper immortality at the same time; and the pale, clear, unclouded moon seems to look down from the open gateway of heaven, and whisper to the drooping heart of man, in the midst of change and sorrow, "Come up hither where the tree of life never fades, and the river of life is never dry, and the inhabitants are never sick or sad." The varied aspects of external nature may have thus in every age awakened in man the feeling of his immortality—if not, then the voice of Providence, through sore and many-shaped trials, must have done so. At all events the feeling *is in* man, and only requires to be awakened, and rightly directed; and just as the casual hearing of a youthful melody will call up the fondest but long forgotten associations of childhood, and of early home, and

bring the soul at once into contact with the far past, in like manner may the spirit of man, by the voice of nature or of providence, by the varied aspects of the one or the other, be sent forth as casually and as suddenly into the distant future, and be made to realise almost as surely the immortality before it, as the past which it has left behind. If there is a loving and a tender remembrance of the past, generally speaking, in every bosom, a remembrance that can be easily awakened; if man will not altogether bury the memories of early life in oblivion, there is no less in every bosom, speaking in the same general terms, a feeling of immortality, which may be as easily called into action as the remembrance of the past. It would therefore be as easy for man to divest himself of all thought of past existence, as it would be for him to get quit of all thought of a future state of being. He may try the former, but he cannot succeed, and he may try the latter, and he may imagine that he has succeeded, but thoughts of immortality will intrude themselves, perhaps with as little welcome as the handwriting upon the wall; *but there they are, for they are in man*; and though he may strive to repress them, yet a thousand casual and seemingly trifling circumstances will start them into life.

“Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind
 Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind;
 His soul, proud science never taught to stray
 Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
 Yet simple nature to his hope has given,
 Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heaven;
 Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
 Some happier island in the watery waste,
 Where slaves once more their native land behold,
 No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
 To be, contents his natural desire,
 He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
 But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
 His faithful dog shall bear him company.”

Man is thus, by the testimony of his own feelings and aspirations, an immortal being. These are, so to speak, the higher instincts of his nature. But it does not follow from this that he knows, or can know, without a Divine revelation,

whither he is going, or the destiny that awaits him. The organ of vision is of little use to man if he is in utter darkness; if he has no element, no light adapted to that organ, it avails him little whether he possesses it or not; the very possession of it would only increase his wretchedness—and these aspirations after immortality would only have embittered his lot, had there been no light from above to guide him to the home after which his affections so fondly yearned. But he is no longer left in painful doubt as to a future state of being. The Bible has clearly revealed to him a FATHER and a HOME, —at once the temple of true fame, knowledge, and devotion, —so that his longings after immortality, that found a transient happiness in the dreams of “Elysium,” or in the “Islands of the blessed,” or in the fabled “Hesperides,” have been far more than realised in the happy home of a Father’s love. What none of the ancient philosophers could either clearly teach or firmly believe, because they could never gain the region of certainty, has been revealed with all the ample breadth of Divine teaching, by Jesus, “who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel.” He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

All this does the Bible reveal to man as an immortal and a fallen being. It confirms his longings after immortality, and shows how he may be as completely and endlessly happy as the highest and the farthest reaching aspiration of his own spiritual nature can desire. It reproves his native earthliness—if his affections fondly gather round the things of time, it brings before him the glorious realities of eternity—a far brighter, and a far happier, and a far more glorious world than this. It stops him in his eager chace after the pleasures or the honours of this world, and bids him look up to the bright worlds of purity and bliss that sparkle overhead, which may all be his to visit, to study, to admire, and enjoy throughout eternity; and asks him to weigh the gold, the honours, the pleasures of earth, with the exhaustless treasures, the immortal glories, and the unfading joys of heaven, and says to him,—all these will I

give to him that overcometh. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It whispers to the sighing exile, "There is a Father's house in heaven." To the weary heart, "Be of good cheer, in that house there are many mansions; there is one for thee." It never deprecates assiduous attention to the daily business of life,—far from it; but man has a mind to cultivate, and a soul to save, and it does denounce, in the strongest terms, that work of life which admits of no time, and furnishes no opportunity, for the improvement of the one and the salvation of the other. It urges man to a work of vigorous enlightenment on the one hand, and agonising effort for salvation on the other. It keeps ever steady to its main purpose, by threatening, promise, persuasion, prospect, and appeal, to direct man to another and a better world. Amid all the changes of life, the inordinate attachment of men to its pleasures, its business, and its wealth, it is ever lifting up its voice in these solemn words, which, however much they are neglected now, will be found to be too true by thousands at last, when the awful issue has been realised! "What is a man profited, though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Nor can the Bible be charged with a false and affected sentimentalism towards the poor, when it addresses them on the subject of immortality. It never deludes them with the false hope with which some are apt to flatter themselves, that because they have suffered much here, they are certain, merely on this account, of proportionate blessing hereafter. It only presents one way of escape from the miseries and sins of the present life to all ranks and classes of men. There is no royal road to heaven in the Bible. It looks upon all as needing salvation, and it opens up the way of blessing to all who will but walk therein. It never overlooks the great mission which it comes to fulfil towards man as an immortal being. It is said of Philip, king of Macedonia, that he kept a slave in constant attendance upon him to whisper in his ear, lest he might forget himself amid the

splendours of royalty, and the flattery of his courtiers, "Philip, remember thou art a man!" And if you will take the Bible as your faithful attendant, it will never cease to lift up its voice amid the depressing cares of life, amid the anxieties and sore struggles of your lot, amid all your hostile environments; and when you are in danger of abandoning yourselves to the creed of despair, "Remember you are immortal. Would you barter the glories of yonder world for the vanities and vexations of this?" And what it says to one it will say to all—to the rich or the avaricious man, who is in danger of making gold his god, and to the poor man, who is in danger of becoming altogether impatient and desperate with his heavy burden, "Remember you are immortal!" To the one, "Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" and to the other, "Possess your soul in patience, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh; for hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the promises?"

If it teaches us to live in the faith of another and a better state of being;—if it is but a confirmation of our longings and aspirations upon this subject, will it not enable us to die in the sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality? It will. It presents us with the Prince of Life, who was dead and is alive, and who liveth for evermore, the Divine Redeemer, who has all dominion over death and the invisible world; who has himself entered the dismal territories of the last enemy; and who has left in those dark domains the marks of his own footsteps, and the light of his own gracious promises, to guide and cheer the faltering pilgrim in "the valley of the shadow of death." Not only have friends gone before us; not only have our dearest kinsfolk entered this valley at midnight, morning, and noon,—but the Elder Brother—the Divine Friend has gone before, not as a captive, but a conqueror—not as a prisoner, but as a prince—and death to all who follow Him is the passage to glory. "At evening time it shall be light" with them, for "the Lord God is a sun and shield: He will give grace and glory."

LECTURE XI.

THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO ALL MEN.

Contrast between Judaism and Christianity. The latter, a universal remedy. Instances of this adaptation,—Sir Walter Scott; Burns; John Sterling; Göethe; Professor Wilson; Flora Hastings; An aged Believer; “Cottager,” described by Cowper; two Widows; the world’s gathering.

If this book contains God’s remedy for the spiritual distemper which has invaded our common humanity, then it must be a remedy adapted, not merely to a few, but to all, and not merely to the present, but to all future generations of men. But is this not taxing the Bible too much? Is this not investing it with a universality of adaptation which it does not claim? In answer to this it may be remarked, that Judaism was local, temporary, exclusive, and preparatory in its character; but that was not the ultimate, but only the introductory, religion of the Bible, and therefore it never claims in behalf of Judaism universal adaptation to the wants and the circumstances of our common humanity; but it does so for the Christian faith, which was not designed to be local, temporary, exclusive, or preparatory, but far-reaching as the world, generous as the highest aspirations of our nature, and enduring as the earth itself.

The Bible unfolds a universal remedy for the spiritual maladies of man, and wherever it has come, it has borne witness to its universal adaptation in its power to bless and to heal. No sooner was the Gospel proclaimed, than men of every rank and condition, and from almost every quarter of the known world, acknowledged that they had found at

last the key which fitted the intricate and mysterious wards of the human soul ; which, whilst it opened and revealed the dark chambers of depravity, and made them more hideous and revolting, flashed the purifying light of truth upon them, and opened the fountain of the Redeemer's blood to people of every language, colour, and clime ; unsealed the treasures of mercy to the Gentile as well as to the Jew, and placed the blessings of a common salvation within the reach of all. The very first proclamation of the Gospel attested its adaptation to men of every character and clime. Proclaimed for the first time on the streets of Jerusalem after the death of Jesus, and at a time when, in addition to the ordinary population, there were present,—Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians—the religion of the Bible proved itself to be adapted to every one in this motley assembly.

It was mighty, not merely because it was accompanied by Divine influence—but because men felt that it really solved the mysterious problems of human guilt and human restoration. It was accompanied by Divine influence as the testimony of God himself in behalf of its adaptation to universal man : and no fewer than the representatives of fourteen different quarters of the globe bore testimony to this on the streets of Jerusalem, and this on the very first day the Gospel was proclaimed. It urged repentance upon all, and all felt the need of this ; it went down into the common elements of man's consciousness ; it spoke of pardon, it offered it to all, and all felt the need of this ; it spoke of a Mediator between God and man, and all felt that there was need for one to bear their sins and carry their sorrows ; and believing that Jesus had done this, and that He had brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, and that He who was crucified was now exalted a Prince and a Saviour to bestow repentance and the remission of sins, they found

the very truth which met their case, which supplied every spiritual want, and healed every wound. From that day to this has the religion of Jesus borne ample testimony to its claim of adaptation to universal man. Its whole history is a proof of this. The God of nature could not have been its author had it been otherwise. In his works, design and adaptation are visible everywhere, and in like manner the Bible everywhere is adapted to man. We see this in men everywhere, of the most diverse character and habits, separated from each other by the greatest distance which the bounds of our globe or the limits of human character and condition will permit, and yet becoming the subjects of a common faith, which produces in every one a common hope, love, and joy. The Ethiopian eunuch, riding in his gilded chariot; Lydia, the seller of purple; Cornelius, the centurion; Onesimus, the slave; Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor, and the Philippian jailor; Dionysius, the Athenian judge, and the humble women that resorted to the river-side for prayer; the philosophers of Athens, the debauchees of Corinth, the soothsayers and magicians of Ephesus—all felt, when they received the truth, the same common adaptation to common wants, and kindred sympathy in common hopes and joys. And so is it still. It does not matter who receives the truth, or where it is received. It is for man, *wherever and whatever he is.*

Every man, in every quarter of the globe, may clasp the Bible to his bosom and say, "This is for me." And so it is. Man everywhere is a sinner, and he needs a Saviour; he is everywhere the child of sorrow, and he needs comfort; he is everywhere an immortal being, and he needs to be told of the eternity that is before him—and the Bible alone does this, and is of all books the only one adapted to meet the spiritual necessities of man, whatever be his rank or condition in life, his language or his home, his colour or his clime; whether he is a Hottentot or a Hindoo, a Caffre or a Chinaman, an Esquimaux or an Englishman, a dweller at the tropics or at the poles

It is as much adapted to the wandering Arab amid the wastes of the desert, as it is to the enterprising merchant in the vast wilderness of London life. It is suited to all ranks and conditions of men; to the shepherd in his shieling, to the stone-breaker by the way-side, to the fisherman in his hut, to the forester in his cottage nestled amid clustering roses and mantling ivy, to the toiling multitudes in the crowded lanes and alleys of our manufacturing towns, or to the dwellers in splendid mansions and ancestral halls of wealth and grandeur.

It is a book suited to *the highest intellect, the brightest genius*, and at the same time to *the untutored children of poverty and toil*. I cannot better illustrate this than by taking a few examples from real life. Lockhart, in his *Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott*, has recited a most touching incident of the great literary magician, which took place but a few hours before his death. Sir Walter had just returned from the sunny clime of Italy greatly shattered in mind and body. Once more in his own beautiful mansion of Abbotsford, he somewhat revived, and the scene of the second and third day after his arrival is described by Lockhart as touching in the extreme. The dying author of a hundred tales that had spell-bound many a heart in this and other lands, expressed an ardent wish to be carried out into his garden:—

“We procured,” says Lockhart, “a Bath chair from Huntly Burn, and Laidlaw and I wheeled him out before his door, and up and down for some time on the turf, and among the rosebeds then in full bloom. The grandchildren admired the new vehicle, and would be helping in their way to push it about. He sat in silence, smiling placidly on them and the dogs their companions, and now and then admiring the house, the screen of the garden, and the flowers and trees. By-and-by he conversed a little, very composedly, with us—said he was happy to be at home—that he felt better than he had ever done since he left it, and would perhaps disappoint the doctors after all.

“He then desired to be wheeled through his rooms, and we moved him leisurely for an hour or more up and down the hall and the great library:—‘I have seen much,’ he kept saying, ‘but nothing

like my ain house—give me one turn more.’ He was gentle as an infant, and allowed himself to be put to bed again, the moment we told him that we thought he had had enough for one day.

“Next morning he was still better. After again enjoying the Bath chair for perhaps a couple of hours out of doors, he desired to be drawn into the library, and placed by the central window, that he might look down upon the Tweed. Here he expressed a wish that I should read to him, and when I asked from what book, he said—‘Need you ask? There is but one.’ I chose the 14th chapter of St John’s Gospel; he listened with mild devotion, and said when I had done—‘Well, this is a great comfort—I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were yet to be myself again.’”

Burns admitted in the earlier part of his life, that he “would not exchange the noble enthusiasm” with which the following three verses of Scripture inspired him, “for all that this world has to offer”—“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—Rev. vii. 15-17. In writing from Edinburgh to a friend, in after life, he says of the Bible, “It is really a glorious book. I sent for my bookbinder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town, and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.” And at the close of his mournful career, when he was a poor invalid, distracted in mind and shattered in body, when former friends had fled, he turned to this never-failing source of consolation, and was frequently seen reading a small copy of the New Testament on the shores of the Solway Frith.

Poor John Sterling, the records of whose fitful, sorrowful life have been recently presented to the public by Archdeacon Hare and Thomas Carlyle, felt, when he was dying, that there was no anchor to his soul drifting into eternity but the Bible, from which, as a curate, he had taught at one time,

but which, when he unfortunately lapsed into scepticism, he threw aside. In his last moments he was seen eagerly searching for something among his bedclothes, and on being asked what it was he was looking for, begged for "the old Bible" which he had used, when a curate, amongst the cottages of the poor, and he died with it in his arms.

Goëthe, the greatest poet of Germany, has left behind him the following testimony:—"As for myself, I loved and valued it (the Bible), for almost to it alone did I owe my moral culture; and the events, the symbols, the similes, had all impressed themselves deeply upon me, and had influenced me in one way or another."

Professor Wilson, or, as he is better known to the readers of "Blackwood" by the characteristic name of "Christopher North," in some of his beautiful tales in the "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life," has presented us, in all the rich hues of his own fervid imagination and glowing language, with the noble virtues that have adorned many a lowly hearth, and have sprung up beneath the overarching boughs of the tree of life. He has put the following beautiful passage into the mouth of one who had endured more than an ordinary share of human trials:—

"I used to read to my boys, sitting round my knees, out of many of these books, before they could read themselves—but now I never peruse them, for their cheerful stories are not for me. But there is one book I do read, and without it I should long ago have been dead. The more the heart suffers, the more does it understand that book. Never do I read a single chapter, without feeling assured of something more awful in our nature than I felt before. My own heart misgives me; my own soul betrays me; all my comforts desert me in a panic; but never yet once did I read one whole page of the New Testament that I did not know that the eye of God is on all his creatures, and on me like the rest, though my husband and all my sons are dead, and I may have many years yet to live alone on the earth."¹

In the "Recreations" of the same brilliant genius, there

¹ Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life—The Minister's Widow

are many passages of wondrous power and beauty, which flash out from amid glowing descriptions of moor and mountain, lake and river, and which take the reader as much by surprise, as these same glorious scenes have often burst unexpectedly upon the eye that loves to gaze upon the outspread beauties of nature. Speaking of deistical writers, he says,—

“But how came they by the truths they did know? Not by the work of their own unassisted faculties—for they lived in a Christian country; they had already been imbued with many high and holy beliefs, of which—had they willed it—they could never have got rid; and to the very last the light which they, in their pride, believed to have emanated from the inner shrine—the penetralia of Philosophy—came from the temples of the living God. They walked all their lives long—though they knew it not, or strived to forget it—in the light of revelation, which, though often darkened to men’s eyes by clouds from earth, was still shining strong in heaven. Had the New Testament never been—think ye that men in their pride, though

‘Poor sons of a day,’

could have discerned the necessity of framing for themselves a *religion of humility*? No. As by pride we are told the angels fell—so by pride man, after his miserable fall, strove to lift up his helpless being from the dust; and though trailing himself, soul and body, along the soiling earth, and glorying in his own corruption, sought to eternise here his very sins by naming the stars of heaven after heroes, conquerors, murderers, violators of the mandates of the Maker whom they had forgotten, or whose attributes they had debased by their own foul imaginations. They believed themselves, in the delusion of their own idolatries, to be ‘Lords of the world and demigods of fame,’ while they were the slaves of their own sins and their own sinful deities. Should we have been wiser in our generation than they, but for the Bible? If in moral speculation we hear but little—too little—of the confession of what it owes to the Christian religion—in all the Philosophy, nevertheless, that is pure and of good report, we see that ‘the day-spring from on high has visited it.’ In all philosophic inquiry there is, perhaps, a tendency to the soul’s exaltation of itself—which the spirit and genius of Christianity subdues. It is not sufficient to say that a natural sense of our own infirmities will do so—for seldom indeed have deists been lowly-minded. They have talked proudly of

humility. Compare their moral meditations with those of our great divines. Their thoughts and feelings are of the 'earth earthy;' but when we listen to those others, we feel that their lore has been God-given.

'It is as if an angel shook his wings.'

"Thus has Christianity glorified philosophy; its celestial purity is now the air in which intellect breathes. In the liberty and equality of that religion, the soul of the highest philosopher dare not offend that of the humblest peasant. Nay, it sometimes stands rebuked before it—and the lowly dweller in the hut, or the shieling on the mountain side, or in the forest, could abash the proudest son of science, by pointing to the Sermon of our Saviour on the Mount—and saying, 'I see my duties to man and God *here!*'"

* * * * *

"But turn from the oracles of man—still dim even in their clearest responses—to the Oracles of God, which are never dark; or if so, but

'Dark with excessive bright

to eyes not constantly accustomed to sustain the splendour. Bury all your books, when you feel the night of scepticism gathering around you—bury them all, powerful though you may have deemed their spells to illuminate the unfathomable—open your Bible, and all the spiritual world will be as bright as day."¹

I was lately much struck in perusing the following verses, written by the late gifted Lady Flora Hastings, and which she has entitled her "Last Bequest." The inmate of a palace, basking for a season in the sunshine of royal friendship, she seemed born to a high and happy destiny. But an evil day came—she was made the innocent victim of a foul calumny, which overwhelmed her with anguish, and brought her in sorrow to an untimely grave. But she was not without consolation. She turned to her Bible, and in its precious truths she felt there was a "pavilion from the strife of tongues." On her deathbed she bequeathed her Bible to her mother in the following touching lines:—

"Oh, let the kindred circle, far in our northern land,
From heart to heart draw closer affection's strength'ning hand

¹ "Recreations," vol. iii. pp. 119-121, 219.

To fill my place long vacant, soon may our loved ones learn;
For to our pleasant dwelling I never shall return.

"Peace to each heart that troubled my course of happy years;
Peace to each angry spirit that quench'd my life in tears!
Let not the thought of vengeance be mingled with regret;
Forgive my wrongs, dear mother! seek even to forget.

'Give to the friend, the stranger, whatever once was mine;
Nor keep the smallest token to wake fresh tears of thine,
Save one, one loved memorial, with thee I fain would leave;
'Tis one that will not teach thee yet more for me to grieve.

"'Twas mine when early childhood turn'd to its sacred page,
The gay, the thoughtless glances of almost infant age;
'Twas mine thro' days yet brighter, the joyous years of youth,
Whenever had affliction bow'd down mine ear to truth.

"'Twas mine, when deep devotion hung breathless on each line
Of pardon, peace, and promise, till I could call them mine;
Till o'er my soul's awakening the gift of Heavenly love,
The spirit of adoption descended from above.

"Unmark'd, unhelp'd, unheeded, in heart I've walk'd alone,
Unknown the prayers I've utter'd, the hopes I held, unknown
Till in the hour of trial, upon the mighty train,
With strength and succour laden, to bear the weight of pain.

"Then oh! I fain would leave thee, for now my hours are few,
The hidden mine of treasure, whence all my strength I drew.
Take, then, the gift, my mother, and, till thy path is trod,
Thy child's last token cherish—it is the Book of God."

Enter with me that lowly dwelling. It is the abode of honest poverty, of venerable piety and worth. The only inmate is an aged believer. The trials of life have fallen thickly around him. Wife and children he has none. He has stood by the grave of his whole household. The last stroke was the sorest of all, when he buried his profligate son, and dropped many tears over the remains of his impenitent child. And now he is left alone. The infirmities of age are creeping upon him. The trials of life have furrowed his brow, and whitened his hairs. His arm is no longer strong, to earn his bread; but is he hopeless, despairing, and sad? Far from it. You find him, perhaps, reading his well-

thumbed Bible, soiled and frail with the eager handling of many years. The fire in his grate may be but small ; but there is a sacred flame in his heart. The rapture of holy emotion is there, that brightens up the dim eye and the pallid cheek of age ; and as he muses on the promises of God, on the covenant of peace, on the blessings of salvation, on the unchangeable security of these, on the glorious prospects of believers, "the fire burns," faith passes through the vail of present darkness and suffering—the very walls of his lonely dwelling seem radiant with heavenly visions—the light of the upper sanctuary beams around him, and the infirmities of age and the trials of life are greatly softened and subdued by the exceeding and eternal weight of glory about to be revealed.

Turn to another scene, so beautifully described by Cowper :—

"Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store ;
Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
Shuffling her threads about the livelong day
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light ;
She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,
Has little understanding, and no wit,
Receives no praise ; but, though her lot be such,
(Toilsome and indigent) she renders much ;
Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew ;
And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes
Her title to a treasure in the skies."

I happened to be standing in a grocer's shop one day in a large manufacturing town in the west of Scotland, when a poor, old, frail widow came in to make a few purchases. There never was, perhaps, in that town a more severe time of distress. Nearly every loom was stopped. Decent and respectable tradesmen, who had seen better days, were obliged to subsist on public charity. So much money per day (but a trifle at most) was allowed to the really poor and deserving. The poor widow had received her daily pittance,

and she had now come into the shop of the grocer to lay it out to the best advantage. She had but a few coppers in her withered hands. Carefully did she expend her little stock—a pennyworth of this and the other necessary of life nearly exhausted all she had. She came to the last penny, and with a singular expression of heroic contentment and cheerful resignation on her wrinkled face, she said, “Now I must buy oil with this, that I may see to read my Bible during these long dark nights, for it is my only comfort now when every other comfort has gone away.”

“Did you ask me, sir, if I had a Bible?” said a poor old widow to a benevolent gentleman, who, some years ago, was endeavouring to ascertain in what degree the humbler classes in one of the suburbs of London were furnished with the Holy Scriptures, and who had found that many were without them, and not a few without the wish to have them. “Did you ask me if I had a Bible? Thank God, I have a Bible. What should I do without my Bible? It was the guide of my youth, and it is the staff of my age. It wounded me and it healed me; it condemned me and it acquitted me; it showed me I was a sinner, and it led me to the Saviour; it has given me comfort through life, and I trust it will give me hope in death.”

Thus has the Bible proved its adaptation, amid all the sins and struggles of humanity, to the highest intellect, the brightest genius, the wealthy dwellers in splendid mansions, and the weary children of poverty and toil.

In a few days the metropolis of our country will exhibit, perhaps, the most interesting spectacle which the world has ever seen, in connection with the social character of man.¹ It is very likely that our common humanity has never yet been so fully represented in one place as it will be in that great family gathering, which will bring together not only the productions, but the representatives, of every nation of any consequence in the world—a gathering which will represent

¹ The Industrial Exhibition of 1851.

far more different parts of the globe, and a much larger portion of the human family, than did the immense crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. In this respect the two events will not bear a moment's comparison. But crowded as our metropolis may be, by the gathering of the nations, I feel confident in affirming, that there will not be a single tribe or nation represented in that vast concourse, into whose dialect or language the Bible has not been already translated, and that through the instrumentality of our own country. The Bible has doubtless been translated into dialects and languages that will not be represented in the coming holiday season of the world. But whether this may be the case or not, the Bible has gone forth long before this idea of a world's gathering, sublime as it really is, had seized the mind of any one, and it has asserted in every dialect and language, where its voice has been heard, "God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth—one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all." Translated, as it now is, into so many languages of the human family, it has been the link that has bound together by a common faith so many tribes and races of men. But for the circulation of the Scriptures during the last half century, and more especially the last twenty years—but for this, and the humanising influences which this has carried with it amongst the nations of the earth, you could not have had at this moment the near prospect of such a world's convention, and for such an object, in the metropolis of our land.

The Bible freely circulated, went out amongst the nations on a mission of peace and love, to teach the common brotherhood of man; and the social blessings of our common Christianity will be seen in the world-tribute which, whether unconsciously or not, will soon be paid to principles which are felt to be adapted to man wherever he is found. Yes, there will not be one in that vast assembly of the nations, whatever be his language or his country, to whom the Bible is not adapted, and for whose spiritual necessities it does not provide; and there is not one on the face of the earth into

whose language the Bible has been translated, but may find in it the Divine solace and friendship that he needs a healing balm for all his sorrows, and a Saviour for all his sins. And I am perhaps not over-confident when I affirm, that in all the languages that will be represented in the coming assembly of the nations, there will be many tongues to bless God for the Bible, and many pious spirits from distant lands to join in the *great May hymn* of this country, which will ascend this year not only from the heart of the nation, but from the heart of the world itself. Whether this may be the case or not, there is not a single language into which the Bible has been translated, but which if represented at the coming gathering of the nations, would furnish its meed of devout gratitude and adoration to the God of truth who sent his word to enlighten the nations, to heal the social and the spiritual wrongs of our race, and who sent his Son to proclaim peace on earth and good-will towards men. There are doubtless many in almost every kindred and people, and tongue and nation, who have felt the adaptation of the Bible to their spiritual wants, and whose common language, if interpreted in our hearing, would be similar to that of the returning exiles from Babylon, the God of the Bible "hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

If there could be an equally vast gathering from all the ends of the earth of all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth, of all those who bear his image, and who are actuated by his spirit, how very soon, in such a vast assembly of the good and the true, would party names and distinctions disappear, when each one beheld his brother possessing so much in common with himself,—when the peasant patriarch from the mountains of Scotland, rigidly orthodox and sternly tenacious of his creed, even to the indulgence sometimes of an over-suspicious spirit, could nevertheless join in fraternal embrace and in holy devotion with his sable brother from the coral reefs of the South Seas, who knew no creed but that of love to Christ, and love to the brethren, and whose language, when interpreted in

the hearing of the vast assembly, would be this—"Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us,—the good Williams brought us the Bible, and our idols and our idols' houses, with their cruelties and abominations, disappeared before its light. It led us to Christ, and Christ led us to peace. I am a brand plucked out of the burning; once I was blind, now I see. He loved me, and gave himself for me." The ebony-coloured sons of Africa, once the most degraded of her tribes, would confess the same Christ in the rude language of the desert, and pointing to the Bible in their own tongue, which Moffat brought them, would say, "This is the African's book as well as the book for the white man; here have the children of the desert found a friend in their deep sorrows, freedom in bondage, riches in poverty, hope in despair, and have washed away their sins in the blood of the Saviour, who bore the sins and the sorrows of the black as well as the guilt of the white man." Men of every country and clime, of every colour and dialect, would meet in such an assembly as this. They would form the brotherhood of Christ, the spiritual family of the great Father. And the interpretation of their varied dialects and languages, inspired by one common feeling, would be this: "To the Bible and the Saviour whom it reveals, do we owe all that we are, and all that we hope to be. All we are brethren, and one is our master, even Christ. Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

With such evident marks of Divine adaptation in this book to the varied moods and circumstances of universal humanity, what other conclusion can you form than this—that the Bible is God's message to man, and is designed to present him, as a progressively intelligent being, with the sublimest themes for study here, and conduct him to the land where "there is no night," and where he shall no more see, as now, "through a glass darkly,"—to make known to him, as a transgressor of the Divine law, the Christ of God and

the Friend of man, who has suffered for the guilty—to comfort him, as the child of sorrow, with “abundant consolation and good hope,” with the soothing voice of heavenly friendship amid the many trials of life,—and to spread before him, as the heir of immortality, the endless glories of the inheritance-home?

Is this adaptation of the Bible to man, to all men, supported by sufficient evidence? It is. Are there not thousands in every walk of life ready to say, “This word of thine is my comfort in mine affliction”—“In the multitude of my thoughts thy comforts delight my soul”? Thousands have felt this, and cannot be shaken from this conviction by all the assaults of infidelity; they feel that whereas they were blind, now they see—comfortless, now they rejoice—distracted, now they are at peace; and they meet all objectors as the blind man, whose sight was restored, met the objections of the Pharisees, who wished to reason him out of his belief in the power and the goodness of Christ, who had conferred upon him such a benefit—“Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes! If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.” John ix. 30. If the man that opened the eyes of one that was born blind was from God, no less so is this book, which has led the spiritually blind “by a way which they knew not, and in paths which they had not known;” which has brought them out into the blessed sunshine of Divine truth and love, and guided their feet into the way of peace. If the Bible were not of God; it could do nothing like what it has already done. Here has the widow found a glorious husband—the orphan child, a father—the mourning soul, beauty for ashes—and all true seekers, a Saviour and a Friend.

Oh, blessed book! the guide of youth, the strength of infirmity, the staff and the stay of tottering years. Thou art the book of childhood, of middle life, of old age—the sweetener of every bitter cup that is given us to drink. With thy comforts the poor man is made rich; and without

thy treasures the rich man is poor. In thee the weary findeth rest—the guilty, pardon—the perplexed, counsel—the faint-hearted, strength—the sick at heart are made glad—the sinner is warned—the backslider arrested—the saint comforted—the dying pilgrim lays himself down on the soft pillow of thy promises, thy prospects, and thy peace. Thou hast a kind word and an endearing look for all. The maimed, the halt, and the blind, who wait at the pools of thy healing, are made whole of their sore diseases. The tongue of the dumb is made to sing, and the lame man to leap for joy. All who wait at the fountains of thy consolation, “shall renew their strength—shall mount up with wings as eagles, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint.”

LECTURE XII.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE.

The Bible and social institutions. Contrast between this and other countries. What has the Bible done in a social point of view? The Past and the Present in our own and other lands. Bible influence in connection with penal statutes, the marriage relation, war, and the Sabbath. Influence on the outer and inner life of man. Extract from Macaulay's History of England. "Cottar's Saturday Night."

If the Bible is from God, its progress must be marked with the foot-prints of love, and purity, and peace, wherever it goes. If it is Divine in its origin, its influence must be positively good. If it could be shown that the Bible is really opposed to the individual or social welfare of man, then in that case it could not be from that God of love "who sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust, and who causeth his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good." Here, then, is a very plain and reasonable test to apply to the Scriptures. Have they exercised such a beneficial influence upon the world, as to furnish at least presumptive evidence that they are of God, and not of man? My answer to this is a most emphatic—Yes. And I most firmly believe, that if all who happen to think otherwise would but give the Bible and its influence a candid consideration, they could not but be convinced that the Bible, if not from God, is at least like Him in his benevolent designs—the best book in the world, and worthy of all acceptation, on account of the incalculable benefits which it confers. If the claims of this book are to be tested, even by the principles of utility, or by the standard of what is useful, then I do not fear the result. The Bible

will be found as truly benevolent in all its designs, and as truly benign in the influence which it wields, and more so, because it deals with man's highest interests—as all the varied arrangements and kindly aspects of nature, the grateful return of morn and even, the balmy breath of spring, the warm flush of summer, the mellow days of autumn, and the wild and hoary majesty of winter. Are all these changes inseparably identified with the God of nature, because beyond the power of man to produce or to control, and because their influence throughout is essentially good? If these warrant us in coming to the conclusion that the material creation is the work of the Great Supreme, the Bible, on a candid examination, will be found, in the nature of its contents, and in the blessed influence which it wields, to be no less the word of God than nature is his work.

There is a strong innate power in the principles of the Bible to civilise and elevate, to reform and refine. This is the native tendency of this book. Wherever you find its principles understood, its precepts carried into practice, you will find all that constitutes the grace, the strength, the purity, the perfection of social and spiritual life. We are more indebted to the Bible for the refinements, the decencies, the comforts of civilised life, than we can now rightly estimate. In a country like this, which has so long enjoyed the blessings of the Gospel, we are scarcely placed in a right position for estimating the amount of social happiness the Bible has been the means of conferring upon the world.

What would this country have been as to its institutions or civilisation without the Bible? Human society will doubtless, through the force of co-operation, native strength, and arrangement, make some progress towards civilisation; a few may even reach a high degree of external refinement and decency; but as to the masses of the people, civilisation without Christianity is but a refined barbarism.

What yet is the civilisation of China, with all her boasted greatness and antiquity? The Bible has not been there to check the progress of human intellect, or fetter her social

institutions, or mould in any way the character of her people. No ; the Bible has not been there ; but its opponents have pointed us to a system of morals prevalent in that country, which, in their estimation, is vastly superior to that of the Bible. Be it so. What, then, has that system done for China ? Boasting such an antiquity, and without the Bible, China should have been the most civilised nation on the face of the earth. Where, then, are her works of intellectual greatness,—her noble achievements in literature, art, and science,—her social institutions, her commercial enterprise ? Has she circumnavigated the globe, and carried with her the blessings of civilisation to the remotest parts of earth ? We have, indeed, been indebted to China for luxuries which are the native products of her soil, but not for light. She has sent us silk and tea, but neither science nor thought. There are many evils, doubtless, existing amongst ourselves, evils which are much to be deplored, and the removal of which should be earnestly sought ; but, on the whole, how vastly superior is our country in its social and moral condition, compared with China, or with the Mohammedan countries, where despotism reigns, where the intellect of man is enfeebled, where his rights are trampled in the dust, and where woman is regarded as a being with no rights, but born to be wholly subjected to the tyranny, the lust, and the caprices of man !

In every country without the Bible, man is an utter stranger to rational liberty, to the blessings of free institutions, to enlightened and refined society, to the daring spirit of commercial enterprise, and woman is degraded and enslaved. The condition of woman in those countries without the Bible is wretchedly abject, pitiful, and helpless. If the Bible had done nothing more than prove the protector and the friend of woman, it would deserve the lasting gratitude of the entire race. Contrast her condition in heathen or Mohammedan countries, where she is not considered the fitting associate of man, but driven from society and reduced to slavery, with her condition in any country where the Bible

is acknowledged of Divine authority, and there you find woman the ornament of society, the nurse of genius, the guardian angel of domestic life, herself blessed and blessing others.

It is not yet much more than half a century since one of the great nations of Europe made the attempt to build up national greatness and glory without a God, without a Bible, without a church, and without a Sabbath. "Death an eternal sleep!" was the motto upon the tombstone; and "No God!" was the inscription on the closed and abandoned churches. Relieved from the overshadowing presence of God, the restraints of the Bible, the rest of the Sabbath, the service of the church, surely France would now rise amongst the nations the brightest star that had ever shone in the firmament of Europe! Delivered from all these deadweight incumbrances, surely she would now move onward with quickened pace in the glorious march of human freedom, the guiding star of nations, the light of the world, the hope of the human race! Without a God, a Bible, and a Sabbath (I shall not speak of the church, for that had long been the mystery of iniquity), but without these three, indispensable for the welfare of any nation, France, from her imperial city to the remotest of her villages, became an appalling Golgotha, a land of darkness, treachery, and murder—rocked upon the furious billows of popular frenzy. All public or private confidence was gone; and had not the God of nations, who was blasphemously disowned, interposed in behalf of France—had she been let alone of God and man—she would doubtless have exterminated herself, and quenched the lurid flames of her own mad sedition against Heaven, and the mutual hatred of her brave but misguided sons, in her own blood. A false religion in France, which at best was but a splendid caricature of Bible Christianity, was doubtless one of the chief causes which led to the first revolution; and no religion, no God, no Bible, produced the darkest night in the reign of terror. The revolutions of that country have never been followed by the expected advantages; and

why? Because the religious element has been wanting, which secured both to this country and America higher and more permanent blessings than have as yet descended upon France.

The question then, Has the Bible exercised a beneficial influence upon the world? is one which, in all candour, must be emphatically answered in the affirmative. What was the state of our own country in the days of our druidical forefathers, or even long after that period? In what condition did the ancient Romans find our forefathers then, without the Bible, and without the knowledge of the true God? On these very mountains which still lift their heads majestically to the clouds; on these far-sweeping plains, and on the banks of these same rivers which still roll onwards to the ocean; on these bluff and barren headlands which still look out upon the sea—did the ancient Romans find our forefathers, in much the same condition as Columbus found the aborigines of America, or Cooke did the savages of the South-sea Islands. They were, like all other pagan nations, degraded by their worship; and though unconquerably brave, they were fiercely savage. They hunted in the woods, they painted their bodies in all the fantastic colours of savage life, whilst their minds were still more disfigured by the dark stains of a cruel superstition; they were the slaves of bloody druidism. They offered their children in sacrifice; and still there are to be found in various parts of the country the Druid's altar, the mystic circle, which has doubtless often witnessed the cruel and the barbarous rites of a horrid superstition. I have seen somewhere such a supposition as the following made, by way of illustrating the social improvement which Christianity has produced in this and other lands:—Were one of the ancient Romans who invaded our country, or one of our druid forefathers—who, from some bluff and rocky promontory, beheld with wonderment the galleys of Cæsar, as they made towards the shore, and the Roman eagle gleaming in the sun—to start from the dead, and from the cliffs of Dover, or from the lofty Skiddaw or the Grampians,

to look abroad upon the country now, what would be the astonishment of both the one and the other? The one could not believe that this was the country he had invaded, and the other could not believe that this was the country in whose deep and trackless forests he had performed his druidical rites, and offered his children to some demon god. And no wonder—what a change! Rich docks, and harbours, and wharfs, containing the wealth of nations; flourishing cities and towns, the busy marts of commerce; flaming forges, crowded factories, have sprung up; the ancient oak-forests have disappeared, to make way for the chimney-forests, beneath whose shadows the toiling millions are ever busy; the battle-steed has given place to the iron horse, which sweeps through the length and the breadth of the land, now girded by the iron road, and linked together from its centre to its remotest parts by the lightning wire; smiling fields of waving grain occupy the place of the ancient forests; whilst the mighty oaks, that would have been worshipped had our country been under the influence of Druidism, have become the ponderous ribs of the “huge leviathans,” to carry the products of our industry or the messengers of peace to the most distant regions of the globe. The ancient Roman and the druid might be pointed to our hospitals, to our infirmaries, to our penitentiaries, to our edifices of mercy, to our dwelling-places of charity and peace; they might be led to inspect the various institutions for clothing the naked, for visiting the destitute, for relieving the poor—and few as these are, in proportion to the wants of the age, the ancient Roman would be forced to confess that his country, in the golden age of her literature and civilisation, knew nothing of them; and both he and our druid forefather would be altogether at a loss to account for the marvellous change. Amid all the grave and numerous evils that still exist, they could not but admit a mighty change for the better; and were they to inquire what has done all this? what has drawn forth the energies, the inventive powers, of the human intellect, and the benevolent aspirations of the human heart?

what has developed the internal resources of the country? what is it that has laid so deeply the foundation of our national freedom, still pledged to advance, but never to go back, till the glorious march of human liberty shall be complete? what is it that has covered the land with seminaries of education, with asylums for the sick and the destitute? what is it that has mitigated the horrors of war, and is gradually extinguishing the war spirit? what is it that has broken the fetters of the slave, and proclaimed liberty to the captives, and breathed into the social system the breath of a new life, more generous, kindly, and expansive? what is it that has impelled to benevolent movement, not skimming the surface of existing evil, but going down to the lowest strata of human wretchedness? what is it that has borne the ships of our country on the swift wings of commercial enterprise, into every sea beneath the sun, carrying with them the products of our industry, the blessings of civilisation, and not seldom the messengers of peace?—what answer could be given, in all candour, to such inquiries as these? but this,—“Behold what the Bible hath wrought! Through the tender mercy of our God the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death.” And if all have not been made partakers of the saving blessings of the Gospel, the whole country has felt the enlightening and cheering sunshine of Bible truth in the numerous social advantages and humanising influences which it confers.

The influence produced in this and other countries by Bible truth, where it is not fettered nor caricatured, is such that you can scarcely form a right estimate of it, from the fact that you have been so long accustomed to its silently-operating power. Let us take some dark and barbarous region where the Gospel has been but recently proclaimed to its wretched inhabitants, and what is the result? As they begin to understand, to believe and practise, their whole modes of thinking and living are revolutionised. Instead of living by hunting or by war, they clear the forests

and till the fields—the spear is exchanged for the spade—the battle-axe is no longer turned against neighbouring tribes—the war is now with woods, with the stubborn powers of nature, and not with man, and “a man is again famous as he lifts up his axe against the tall trees”—rich harvests cover the fields, where the thick jungle spread before—flocks feed where the wild beasts lay in ambush for their prey—the terrific war-whoop is heard no more; for the Gospel brought the true pipe of peace when it taught the savage to pray and to sing the praises of God—the mountain stream that ran to waste, and was often stained with the blood of enemies, is now turned to the service of industry and the growing arts—the decencies and the comforts of civilised life begin to appear—commodious houses are built on the margin of the river, where the mud hut and the wigwam formerly stood—the stir and the enterprise of trade are abroad—the spirit of human freedom walks forth—if slavery still exists, its horrors are greatly mitigated, and will speedily disappear—infanticide is abolished—the cruel rites of bloody superstition are succeeded by the gentle dealings and humanising spirit of the Gospel—woman finds her proper place and appropriate occupations, no longer a beast of burden and a slave, but an equal and a helpmeet—home is a new word, invested with charms and endearing associations unknown before—the influences of civilised life, which follow wherever the Bible goes into the dark places of the earth, pervade the whole; whilst not a few have felt its inwardly renewing power and are born again, all have felt the social blessings which it confers. This is no imaginary picture—this is no dream of the fancy. Many of the South Sea Islands, and many dark places in Africa, will attest the truth of this. The South and the North, the East and the West, will lift up their voices and say, “Behold what the Bible hath wrought!” Within the last two years, in Calabar, it has abolished human sacrifices, that, in some instances, were formerly counted by hundreds, and the bell which tolled when the slaves were led out to die, is now the joyful Sabbath

bell which rings the sable sons and daughters of Africa to the house of prayer.

Some are inclined to think that Christianity is effete, that the Bible has seen its day, fulfilled its mission, lost its power. It is not so. It is still "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." It is still achieving the same moral triumphs as it did in its earliest and brightest days, when it shut up the temples of the gods, and swept their nameless abominations from the cities of ancient Greece and Rome, when it pursued its stately march of love and liberty from the imperial city onwards through the cities of Asia-Minor,—purifying the temple of Venus at Corinth, destroying the fascinations of Diana at Ephesus, and revealing the one living and true God at Athens. It is not without its triumphs still, both in a social and spiritual point of view, at home and abroad. It has raised the Bechuana from the lowest grade of human existence. It has vindicated his identity with the great family of man. It has given him the name, the dignity, the virtues, the hopes of a man and a Christian. The degraded Hottentot has been purified by the washing of regeneration—the ferocious New Zealander has broken his bow and his spear, and his soul has been beautified with the adorning of a meek and a quiet spirit. The widely-scattered islands that gem the South Seas, and which but for sin would seem the abodes of bliss—the beautiful fancy-work of some mysterious agency—have witnessed the dawn of a new creation far more glorious than their own corals, now resplendent with the light of the Gospel. The snows of Greenland have glowed beneath the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and the hearts of the Greenlanders have melted at the story of Divine love.

But you require not to look so far away for proofs in behalf of the benignant influence which the Bible has exercised over the destinies of man. You find these at home. The external, the moral, the humanising influences of Christianity are visible on every hand. They are felt in private as well as in public life—in the domestic circle as

well as in the mart of business. There are many secret influences constantly in operation in the material world, which, whether you are conscious of their presence or not, are highly conducive to health, and their withdrawal, or even partial derangement, would be accompanied with pain or death. Thousands enjoy the blessings of pure light and air, without ever being conscious of how much they owe to them. But deprive them of these, and their physical and moral health would at once suffer. And so is it with the Bible on the part of many who enjoy the social and moral advantages which it confers. They owe much to its light and purity, but having grown up in the midst of these external advantages from earliest life, they deem them as something inseparable from their own being, without tracing them to the influence of the Bible, which, like the Spirit of old moving over the face of the waters, is silently operating on the darkness of human society, and if not penetrating in every case into the inner, at least greatly modifying the outer life. All are more or less indebted to the Bible even for external or social blessings, whether they have experienced the saving efficacy of its truths or not. All must feel this if they will but contrast the social and moral condition of our country with that of others, where the Bible is fettered, caricatured, withheld from the people, or where it is altogether unknown. The man who sits beneath the grateful shade of the palm-tree when the burning sun has arisen in his strength, cannot but feel the luxury of the cool retreat, whether he tastes the fruit or not; and the man who sits beneath the overarching boughs of the tree of life, cannot but feel that it is good for him to be here, whether he reaches forth his hand or not to take and eat of the fruit for the healing of the nations.

The Bible has exerted a humanising influence upon the penal statutes of every country where it has been received as a welcome guest. It has introduced such measures as are calculated to reform the criminal rather than cut him off. It has ever been the Magna Charta of true liberty; the

enemy of oppression and slavery ; the friend of the poor ; the protector of women ; the patron of learning, and art, and science ; the guardian of the sacred relation of marriage, around which it has thrown a holy sanctity, as the source of all the domestic virtues, and the endearing associations of home. It has softened in some measure the cruel spirit of war ; and nations will yet have recourse to the principles of the Bible, and not to the sword, for the settlement of their grievances. It has secured to the toiling multitudes of this and other lands the inestimable boon of one day's rest in seven—a blessing which the grasping spirit of cupidity would take away if it could ; but its efforts will be vain, so long as the Bible exercises its appropriate influence over the minds of men. “It is mentioned in some of the biographical sketches in the life of Arkwright, the great improver of machines for the manufacture of cotton, that he had made a most elaborate statistical account, and published it, *of the loss which the nation had sustained by not working on Sundays !*” There are many social blessings connected with the Sabbath, for which the toiling multitudes of this and other lands are wholly indebted to the Bible. If you would preserve for yourselves the social and spiritual blessings of this day from the encroachments of mammon, and from the attacks of a false liberalism, cherish the Bible, which is at once the bulwark of the Sabbath, and the strongest break-water against the advancing tide of social evils. The people that love the Bible most have the greatest amount of true liberty and social happiness, the most useful institutions, the holiest Sabbaths, and the happiest homes. “I am convinced,” said the noble martyr of Erromanga, “that the first step towards a nation's temporal and social elevation is to plant among them the tree of life, and civilisation and commerce will entwine their tendrils around its trunk, and derive support from its strength.”

I have hitherto contemplated the influence of the Bible chiefly in the direction of the visible and external results which it has produced on the outer or social phases of

humanity ; but I must not altogether omit the higher, because the saving, influence which the Bible exercises on the inner, spiritual life of man. Bible truth reaches much farther than the mere surface of society. If it went no deeper than this, its influence for good would be like "the morning cloud and the early dew:" it would soon pass away. It is the truth of God, and the medium through which the Divine Spirit acts in purifying the soul of man—in bringing it under the influence of new motives and new desires ; and when the affections of men are once brought under the influence of the truth, they are new creatures, notwithstanding their former circumstances, prejudices, and habits. It has weaned the drunkard from his deadly cup—it has tarnished the gold of the miser, and made him turn from the poorest and most enslaving passion of the human soul, the lust for gold, to lay up treasure in heaven, and to seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. It has shed over the soured and dogged soul of misanthropy, the sunshine of a meek, a glad, and a quiet spirit ; it has silenced the tongue of daring profanity, and filled its polluted mouth with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ; it has spread the smile of love over the haggard face of envy ; it has washed the hands of dishonesty, and purified its treacherous heart ; it has subdued the tiger to a lamb, and turned the dissipated and the reckless child of infamy, yet the son of many prayers, into a worthy citizen, a devoted and useful Christian, and a steady friend ; it has supported the pious poor in the midst of all their sufferings ; it has brought light in darkness, strength in weakness, joy in sorrow, and abundant consolation when all earthly sources had failed. What, therefore, can you think of the Bible, when you see men in every profession, in every rank and grade of life, brought under its transforming power—"the learned and the rude, the young and the old, the comparatively innocent and unsophisticated child of nature, and the man hackneyed in the ways of the world, the humble peasant and the son of genius, the king on his throne, the prisoner in his cell, the

statesman in his cabinet, the philosopher in his studies, the merchant in his enterprises, the miser in his hoards, the persecutor in the paroxysm of his rage and cruelty, the hermit in his solitude, the fashionable votary in the dizzy whirl of pleasure," the youth who has been dandled upon the lap of ease, and the ragged urchin, with rough and rugged exterior, and most sinister aspect—what can you think of the Bible, and its transforming power, manifested upon all such, and even upon the worst of our race, but that it is from God? Yes, of Divine authority; a book that has accomplished more for the real good of man than any other book, yea than all other books put together have ever done; and thus furnishing the strongest presumptive evidence that it is not of the "earth, earthy," but cometh from above. The direct tendency of the Bible is to make men happy in their outward condition and in their inner spiritual life, to eradicate all bitterness within by uniting the soul through faith to the highest embodiment of the spiritual and divine life, even to the Redeemer himself, in union with whom the soul has a peace which the world cannot give, neither take away.

When did the Bible ever make a man a worthless citizen, a faithless husband, a cruel father, a treacherous friend? On the contrary, has it not always improved the social and the spiritual condition of man? I admit at once that many have professed to be guided by the Bible who have grievously dishonoured its principles and disgraced its precepts. But the Bible is not answerable for such inconsistency. You might as well blame the sun for a defective supply of light, when all that was admitted came through cracked and smoked glass, as blame the Bible with the inconsistencies of those who profess to believe it. Either judge of the Bible altogether by itself, or take a genuine specimen of true faith in its principles, and a pure life governed by its precepts. If this is done, I do not fear the result, for the Bible and its religion will be found profitable for the life that now is and for that which is to come.

Here then is a book—account for it as you will—which

has produced the most marvellous results, which has exercised the most beneficial influence on the outer and inner life of man—a book which, whatever be the sentiments or practice of many who profess to believe it, stands forth the enemy of all oppression, injustice, dishonesty, impurity, and everything that is base, and mean, and hurtful, in man or woman, in the ruler or the ruled—a book which, whilst it does not profess to teach politics, has done more than all other books to secure to man his inalienable rights, not by unfolding any set of formal institutions, but by infusing into the inner life of man the right principles on which external arrangements, institutions, movements, and agencies should be based—a book which is not a formal, mechanical, and dry system of rules, but spirit and life—the breath, the truth of God, which, if passing into the soul of man, and operating from within outwards, the bone, and muscle, and flesh of a thousand benevolent agencies for the good of man will speedily appear, and will continue to work for good so long as they are acted upon by the living breath—a book which makes men truthful, peaceful, industrious, kind, dutiful in all the varied walks of life, which urges them to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and thus by reforming the inner life, it leads to reformation, benevolent action in the direction of the outward—a book which, whilst it was not given to be a manual of literature or the sciences, has, nevertheless, from its influence on the inner life, produced more than all other books the finest literary taste and the finest literary productions, and impelled the human intellect onwards in the path of discovery. When the light of Bible truth was extinguished amongst the nations during the dark ages, the light of learning and science was but a feeble flickering flame, which only served to make the darkness more visible. When the Bible was brought forth from the dark and musty shelves of the convent at the Reformation, when it flashed its glorious light over the nations of Europe, it was to the slumbering soul of man like life from the dead; it was to learning, liberty, science, and commercial enterprise, like the breath which imparted new

life to the dry bones in the Valley of Vision ; the spirit of man was unbound ; he had been long a captive ; the Bible liberated, made him free. The march in every department of human inquiry, in civil and religious liberty, has been one of progress ever since. Look at the literature, the liberty, the institutions, the habits, the commercial enterprise, of those countries where the Bible is but partially known and studiously withheld from the people, and then take any country where the Bible is generally known and loved, and contrast it in all these respects with the former. "Look on this picture, and on that." Without being for one moment invidious in our comparisons, compare the north of Ireland with the south. I do not ask you to go to the dark regions of barbarous heathenism ; but take some of the old chivalric nations celebrated in song and story, and contrast, for example, Scotland with Spain, England with Italy, or the States of New England with the States of the Pope, and I leave you candidly to draw the inference, and to account for the fact which meets you prominently everywhere—the Bible a blessing to individuals, the want of it a curse. The man who believes its precious truths can easily explain this. "Every tree is known by its fruits," and these are the fruits of the tree of life for the healing of the nations.

"Tell me where the Bible is, and where it is not, and I will write a moral geography of the world. I will show what, in all particulars, is the condition of that people. One glance of your eye will inform you where the Bible is, and where it is not. Go to Italy : decay, degradation, suffering, meet you on every side. Commerce droops, agriculture sickens, the useful arts languish. There is a heaviness in the air ; you feel cramped by some invisible power ; the people dare not speak aloud ; they walk slowly ; an armed soldier is around their dwelling ; the armed police take from the stranger his Bible before he enters the territory. Ask for the Bible in the book stores : it is not there, or in a form so large and expensive, as to be beyond the reach of the common people. The preacher takes no text from the Bible. Enter the

Vatican and inquire for a Bible, and you will be pointed to some case where it reposes among prohibited works, side by side with the works of Diderot, Rousseau, and Voltaire. But pass over the Alps into Switzerland, and down the Rhine into Holland, and over the channel to England and Scotland, and what an amazing contrast meets the eye! Men look with an air of independence; there are industry, neatness, instruction for children. Why this difference? There is no brighter sky; there are no fairer scenes of nature; but they have the Bible. And happy are the people in such a case: for it is righteousness that exalteth a nation."

I cannot conclude this lecture without quoting a passage from Macaulay's "History of England," in which he has drawn a very striking contrast between Roman Catholic and Protestant countries, and to this I call your attention, as a convincing proof of the social advantages the Bible confers:—

"From the time when the barbarians overran the Western empire to the time of the revival of letters, the influence of the Church of Rome had been generally favourable to science, to civilisation, and to good government. But during the last three centuries, to stunt the growth of the human mind has been her chief object. Throughout Christendom, whatever advance has been made in knowledge, in freedom, in wealth, and in the arts of life, has been made in spite of her, and has everywhere been in inverse proportion to her power. The loveliest and most fertile provinces of Europe have, under her rule, been sunk in poverty, in political servitude, and in intellectual torpor; while Protestant countries, once proverbial for sterility and barbarism, have been turned by skill and industry into gardens, and can boast of a long list of heroes and statesmen, philosophers and poets. Whoever, knowing what Italy and Scotland naturally are, and what, four hundred years ago, they actually were, shall now compare the country round Rome with the country round Edinburgh, will be able to form some judgment as to the tendency of Papal domination. The descent of Spain, once the first among monarchies, to the lowest depths of degradation, the elevation of Holland, in spite of many natural disadvantages, to a position such as no commonwealth so small has ever reached, teach the same lesson. Whoever passes in Germany from a

Roman Catholic to a Protestant principality, in Switzerland from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant canton, in Ireland from a Roman Catholic to a Protestant county, finds that he has passed from a lower to a higher grade of civilisation. On the other side of the Atlantic the same law prevails. The Protestants of the United States have left far behind them the Roman Catholics of Mexico, Peru, and Brazil. The Roman Catholics of Lower Canada remain inert, while the whole continent round them is in a ferment with Protestant activity and enterprise. The French have doubtless shown an energy and an intelligence which, even when misdirected, have justly entitled them to be called a great people. But this apparent exception, when examined, will be found to confirm the rule; for in no country that is called Roman Catholic has the Roman Catholic Church, during several generations, possessed so little authority as in France.”¹

There is no writer to whom we are so much indebted for a simple, touching, and beautiful exhibition of the happy fireside influence which the Bible has exercised over many a lowly home, than to the author of that immortal poem, “The Cottar’s Saturday Night,” which appeals to the sympathies of every man who has any sense of religion in his soul, whether he lives in a palace or a cot. The true secret of all the more widely diffused social influences of this book is to be found at the hearth of the cottar, when—

“The cheerfu’ supper done, wi’ serious face,
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
 The sire turns o’er, with patriarchal grace,
 The big ha’-Bible, ance his father’s pride;
 His bonnet rev’rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care;
 And ‘Let us worship God!’ he says, with solemn air.”

Homes and hearts thus brought under the influence of this blessed book, have been cheered and upheld amid the stern necessities of the poor man’s lot; and the best wish that I can express for you is, that all your dwellings may be blessed by

the amenities of that holy faith which has borne upwards and onwards through many a sad and weary hour the children of poverty and toil, and which has been a solace and a guide to the tried and the troubled in every walk of life. Let but the family altar be reared in every dwelling, and many a care will be soothed, and the burden of many a trial will be lightened, and "The Cottar's Saturday Night" will be no longer, as it is to many, merely a beautiful picture, but a present reality, full of hope and imperishable blessings for our country and the world at large.

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad."

LECTURE XIII.

THE BIBLE AND SOCIAL ECONOMICS.

Two districts and two families contrasted. "The Cottar's Saturday Night." Important bearing of Bible principles on domestic duties and benevolent agencies; industrious and provident habits; temperance; peace; mental culture. Example from the factories of Lowell, Massachussets. "The Lowell Offering."

THE Bible has a direct tendency to produce those virtues, both in the family circle and in society at large, on the cultivation of which the happiness of families and communities depends. So much is this the case, that in visiting amongst a large portion of the working-classes, one is generally able to tell with perfect accuracy, from the internal appearance and arrangements of their dwellings, whether the Bible is read and esteemed, and the house of God frequented or not. So much am I convinced of the influence of the Bible in promoting family comfort, cleanliness, economical arrangements, industrious and provident habits, in refining the taste, elevating the intellect, purifying the affections, that I do not think that it would be any very difficult task, without any previous knowledge of the people, to tell, merely from the internal appearance of their houses, whether the Bible is read and esteemed or otherwise, and whether they are in the habit of frequenting the house of God or not. Of course there will be exceptions to this. You will find here and there a class of working men, highly intelligent, well read, conversant in history and in some of the sciences—men who take a lead in some of the philanthropic movements of the day, who are in easy circumstances, and have comfortable

homes, but are opponents to the Bible, and are seldom or never seen in any place of worship. They have a high idea of what working men may do for themselves apart altogether from Bibles, churches, priests, or even parliaments; and possessing superior intelligence, they acquire no small degree of ascendancy over their fellow-workmen. But if the few of whom I now speak have comfortable homes, it is because, in a land leavened by Bible influence, they have followed out, though unconscious of this all the while, the very principles of temperance, co-operation, frugality, forethought, and peace, which this book has enjoined, and which it has enforced by the highest motives. But for this book, and the influence which it has exercised upon all our social relations, how vastly different would have been the position of the aristocracy of the working-classes, although they may suppose that this is a position which they have gained for themselves, and altogether apart from any influence which the Bible has exercised in this country! But such cases, compared with the masses that are really in a very different position, are few and far between; and I would undertake, on visiting the greater proportion of the working-classes, even in the most unfavourable circumstances as to depression of trade or badness of locality, to point out those dwellings whose inmates are in the habit of attending places of worship, who enjoy the ministrations of the Gospel, who are plied with its healing and elevating influences, who love their Bible; and I would have little difficulty at the same time in pointing out another class of habitations, the appearance of which is a sure but a sad index of the fact, that their inmates "care for none of these things." The problem may be easily solved:—Given, any district inhabited by the working-classes, and, from the internal appearance and arrangements of their dwellings, to discover whether they have enjoyed the elevating influences and varied agencies of a faithful gospel ministry or not? Any one altogether unacquainted with the previous character or habits of the people to be thus visited, but who knows well the happy influence which the Bible exerts

upon many in their condition in life, will not fail to solve such a problem, and that almost with arithmetical accuracy.

Show me the dwelling that is uniformly untidy, where there is little or no household management so as to secure comfort or economical outlay—where there is unnecessary expenditure and great waste even of the necessities of life—where there is little thrift and no proper disposal of means for a common advantage—where there is the weekly alternative of a “feast and a fast,” as well as idleness at one time, and the unnatural tension to the very utmost of physical energy at another—where there is little or no parental control, or when exercised, it is so in the form of brutal chastisement, or angry scowling imperatives and rough wrathful words, which the youthful Hector soon learns to employ himself when he lords it over some of his younger associates—where indications that betoken a recent visit to the tavern are unmistakeably felt and seen—where clothes and culture, the body and the mind, are neglected—where loud and angry words betoken everything but affection—Enough! I ask for no more—the Bible has not been felt in such a dwelling in its secretly operating power. There is neither love for the Bible, nor “heart within, nor God o’er-head,”—and such is the condition of many thousand families amongst the working-classes, simply because they have not been brought under the elevating influences of Bible truth.

On the other hand, show me a dwelling in one of your dingiest lanes where I shall find perhaps a few carefully tended flowers—a proof that there is some soul here that loves green fields, and that is not altogether dead to the finer feelings of our nature, where there is a cleanliness, a neatness, a *sunshiny something* looking out of every piece of furniture, however humble, and pervading the whole dwelling; where there seems to be naturally just a place for everything, and everything in its place, and where not the least prominent place is the slender book-case, which serves the double purpose of ornament and use, and contains a few good books; where there is careful management, but not parsimony and

meanness; where there is a charm at the fireside which overcomes all the attractions of the tavern,—a charm which may be explained by the kindly words and the sweet sounds of music oftentimes heard at the close of a day's labour, issuing from such a dwelling, which is like a green spot in the dreary desert of social life by which it is surrounded—I ask for no more than this; I shall not even look to see whether or not a Bible is in such a dwelling, for in nine cases out of every ten such indications as these, though they seem to reach no farther than the mere surface of every-day life, are proofs of the outward decencies and respectabilities which the love of Bible truth and practice, and the hallowed agencies of a gospel ministry, will create.

Of the latter family the first clause of the text holds true, “much food is in the tillage of the poor;” and of the former the latter clause is equally true, “but there is much that is destroyed for want of judgment.” In both dwellings there will be a great difference in good trade and bad trade—in health and in sickness—in prosperity and adversity; and why this difference? Simply because the one is more or less influenced by Bible precept and practice, and therefore enjoys in proportion to this influence the decencies and respectabilities of Christian life, whilst the other feels no such influence, and therefore enjoys none of its healing and elevating power.

The contrast between two families has been very strikingly described by an eye-witness in Glasgow, who in several communications addressed to the newspapers of that city, on the subject of Social Reform, has designated himself “Common Sense.” “Visiting along with a friend,” says the writer, “some workmen's houses in Glasgow, we entered a room and kitchen, the walls of which were dingy, the floors unwashed and unswept, the beds unmade, the bedclothes scanty, and what there were of them in a filthy condition—a shake-down of straw in one corner unremoved—the furniture never scrubbed, and in confusion—the windows shut as if they had been nailed down, and no ventilation except what was produced by a broken pane of glass. My friend at once exclaimed, ‘What

a miserable habitation! What need for houses being erected for the working classes! Can you expect sobriety or health to exist here?' Allowing him to address me after this manner, without offering any reply, I introduced him to another house on the same stair-head. The kitchen dresser was as white as snow, and stools and chairs were in the same condition. There were no unwashed dishes covering the dresser-head as in the other house. The floors were clean—the hearthstone, fireside, and parts adjacent white—the walls painted a yellow water colour, which, above the mantelpiece, shone with brightly-scoured tinware and brass candlesticks—an eight-day clock ornamented the kitchen, and the thrifty housewife's mahogany chest of drawers adorned the room. My friend was now charmed, and said, 'Here is a house that I could live in myself with delight;' and being invited by the neatly-attired mistress to sit down on one of her milk-white chairs, he obeyed the call with an alacrity which showed he coveted the pleasure. When congratulating himself on the relief he experienced in this house from the miserable apartments he had just left, his astonishment was very great when I informed him that the architecture of the two dwellings was exactly alike. Both were rooms and kitchens of the very same dimensions, and the whole difference lay in the manner in which they were kept. He would not believe this, until by actual measurement he was obliged to acknowledge the fact. It is of importance to notice also, that the mechanic who owned the comfortable dwelling had as large a family and no greater wages than the one who lived in the sty above described."

This is no exaggeration. Hundreds of such cases may be met with every day. In the one dwelling above described, although I am utterly ignorant of it, intemperance had doubtless banished the Bible, or at least counteracted all its influence, and hence the squalor, filth, and wretchedness; in the other dwelling, of which I am equally ignorant, the Bible and its ordinances had doubtless been loved, and hence the home elevating influences that were at work; the temper-

ance, cleanliness, thrift and peace, which made the latter dwelling a green spot of peace and beauty in the midst of a wide desert of social misery. I have never yet known a single family amongst the labouring classes despise the Bible, and neglect its ordinances, without suffering an awful retribution either in the vicious courses of its sons or in the profligacy of its daughters, beneath which the family-tree fell in premature ruin and decay; and I have never yet known a family in the same class who loved the Bible and its ordinances, but that grew up respected, useful, honourable, and happy. The Bible is the bulwark of domestic happiness; it is the only foundation on which free institutions can be raised; it is the charter of human freedom; and those who imagine that they can build up family or national greatness independent of the Bible, do greatly err, neither knowing the power of the Scriptures nor the weakness of human nature. Some may deem the Bible too stringent in its principles, too inflexible in its demands, for their crooked policy, for their notions of business and social life; but the truth is, society at large, in all its varied departments, will ever be terribly disjointed and distracted, full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, till the spirit of the Bible is infused into every section of social life, and its great law recognised as the guiding principle: "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, that do ye also unto them."

The primary object of the Bible is not to teach us merely what is convenient, and honourable, and decent for the present world, to instruct us in the best social arrangements that might secure the greatest amount of earthly good. No; the principal design of the Bible is to make known to us the way of salvation through the mediation of the Divine Redeemer; but if there is anything in this book only second in importance to this great object, it is the social well-being of man, as essentially subservient to higher and imperishable interests.

You will therefore look in vain for any treatise on political economy, or for any exposition of social economics in the

Bible; and yet there are certain great principles which pervade its every page, and which lie at the foundation of any right system either of the one or of the other. The household virtues invariably follow in its wake, and these again branch out into all the departments of social life. It inculcates a spirit of love, and more especially in the married relation; and this is of vast importance in every family circle, but more especially in that of the working man.

With intense earnestness have the writers of the New Testament enjoined upon all to cultivate a *spirit of love*; and whilst this is of immense importance to every community and to every family circle, to none more so than to that of the working man. In that beautiful poem, "The Cottar's Saturday Night," which every working man should read as a proof of what the Bible will do in the humblest walks of life, the poet has produced a striking home scene of family affection, peace, and comfort, where, beneath the cottar's lowly roof-tree, far away in the moor, and amid the chill blasts of November,

"With joy unfeigned brothers and sisters meet."

And the secret of all this is to be found in the "big ha' Bible," which the aged sire turns o'er with patriarchal pride. This has been the tree that was thrown into the bitter waters. The Bible has sweetened the sourness, smoothed the asperities, and mellowed the bitterness of human life.

In that same dwelling the poet has brought before us a lively picture of *industrious habits*, which the Bible enjoins, and which cannot but follow in its wake. There are many thousands, alas! that, toil as they may, can earn but a scanty subsistence; but how much worse would their condition be, were they giving way to a reckless indolence and sloth! The Bible enjoins honest and diligent labour for an honourable subsistence; it inculcates earnest activity for the things of time, so far as this is subservient to an unembarrassed prosecution of higher interests. The activities of men have been all the more called into play, and commercial enter-

prise has increased just as Bible truth and knowledge have advanced. The diffusion of Bible knowledge is of immense importance even in a commercial point of view. The commencement of every new mission station is the opening of a new market for our goods; and just as the social condition of the people at home is improved (and nothing will do this in a surer or in a shorter way than the Bible itself), they will become consumers to a far greater extent of our own manufactures; an increased demand will require an increased supply; this again will give better and more employment to our operatives; whilst several branches of our industry that are now languishing would be revived—fearful depressions would be less frequent—the working man would not need “to beg for leave to toil”—and complaining, to a great extent, would be banished from our streets.

As to *provident habits*, these are urgently required on the part of the working classes, if they would consult their best interests; and whilst the Bible was not given to bring before us a system of savings banks or provident institutions, yet as to the habits of careful management and forethought which these are designed to foster, it may serve as an excellent text-book, especially the book of Proverbs. The best of all examples is the Saviour himself, who, though the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily, said, “Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.” Whatever you may think of the Saviour, surely it would be of immense advantage for you to imitate Him in this respect. This is absolutely necessary in a commercial country like this, where trade is exposed to so many fluctuations and reverses. The principal experience of past depressions of trade occurring at intervals of no great distance, should teach every artizan to lay his account for these, and by a careful husbanding of his means in the better times, to be prepared for the evil day. I know, alas! that there is, in many cases, too good reason for the complaint, “There is nothing to lay past—nothing to serve for the future. We are toiling at poor work; we sometimes cannot even procure it; we are living

from hand to mouth ; our condition is fixed ; it is inevitably that of hard toil, poorly paid, from which there is no thrift or outcoming. How then can we be otherwise than we are,—wretchedly poor, and doomed to believe in the creed of despair ?” Much of this is true ; alas ! too true. But your condition is not hopeless. There is not yet an end to personal effort to improve yourselves, and self-reliance upon your own resources. You have not surely reached the point of despair, when you can discover no further resources within yourselves—nothing remaining for you but reckless passiveness, which, like the vampire that lulls to sleep, with its fanning and treacherous wing, and sucks at the same time the blood of its victim. I ask you in sober earnestness, and with a full acquaintance with the terrible evils, the sore struggles, which oftentimes fall to the lot of the labouring poor, would a little more self-denial and reliance—a little more providence and better household management—a little more skill in social economics, carefully carried into every-day life, not greatly alleviate the miserable condition of thousands, and lift them much above the position of constant exposure to want, and place within their reach, if not the luxuries, at least the comforts of life, and elevate their social and moral standing, and increase their dignity, respectability, and influence ?—a state of things certainly much better than the sort of reckless “hand-to-mouth” style of living to which many drive themselves by their intemperate and improvident habits. There are doubtless many families in poor circumstances who are exceptions to these remarks ; but there are thousands, wretchedly poor, who, for the most part, have themselves to blame, and who, but for reckless and improvident habits, might have been respectable and happy. Whatever be the adverse circumstances—the sore struggles—the overwhelming difficulties of the poor—if they are provident and pious, if they husband their scanty means to the best advantage, their labours, hard as they are, their earnings, stinted as they are, will be doubly more productive, and will yield much more comfort than the labours and the earnings

of those who are improvident, intemperate, and reckless. This is so true and so obvious, that many instances in proof will occur to your minds of individuals and families who have but small earnings, and yet they are far more comfortable in every way than their neighbours, whose incomes are double those of the former, but squandered upon expensive and ruinous habits. Next to the delightful spectacle of seeing a large number of working men engaged in the worship of God, was that of witnessing on several occasions a considerable number of working men and women depositing a portion of their hard won earnings in the savings bank of this town. I would judge very favourably of such working men and women as these, and a visit to their respective abodes would, I am sure, have convinced me that the inmates were more or less under the influence of Bible truth, and had learned to value and to obey the command of the Saviour, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

As to the *Temperance movement*, there is nothing of which I am more fully convinced than that this movement is sanctioned by the benevolent spirit of the Bible, and loudly called for in the present circumstances of our country. Hard times, want of employment, inadequate remuneration, high-priced provisions, heavy taxation, are not nearly so much opposed to household thrift and comfort as intemperate habits, by means of which so much is thrown away upon that which is neither food, nor clothing, nor education, nor social improvement, but to working men and their families unmitigated mischief in every point of view. The best *co-operation* which working men could form—the best *socialism* which could band them together—the best *communism* which could draw forth their united energies, would be the combined, persevering efforts of all working men in this country, to put down that evil which has crushed them *longer and lower* than all other hostile influences put together, and which, if they were but true to themselves, they are able to crush beneath their feet. The benevolent spirit of the Christian system is just as much a Scriptural warrant for the temperance

movement as it is for any earnest effort to abolish slavery or any other evil opposed to the best interests of man, and offensive to the God of holiness and love.

As to the *Peace movement*, so essential to the commercial and social prosperity of this and every other country, and therefore intimately connected with the temporal well-being of the working man, there can be no doubt that the ultimate design of Christianity is the universal establishment of peace throughout this distracted world. If the Christian faith universally prevailed, there would be universal peace, and just as her spirit is understood and embodied in the actions of individuals, communities, and nations, this blessing so inestimable in a commercial, social, and religious point of view, will not be regarded as it is now, a pleasing dream, but a permanent and most blissful reality. When the spirit of the Bible shall rule in cabinets, councils, communities, and circles of private or social life, man shall be no longer exposed to the wide, wasting, exterminating calamity of war, nor to the fury of malignant passions, which have cast their baleful shadows over the weary hearts, the distracted homes, the troubled haunts of men. If the spirit of the Bible were predominant, would "man's inhumanity to man make countless thousands mourn"? Would they be any longer exposed to the iron rule of the despot—to the evils of bad government, or to the anarchy, the riot, and the bloodshed of no government? Would the strong trample upon the weak? Would might be right? Would intolerance, with sacrilegious hands and fiendish spirit, seize the banner of the cross, and perpetrate the bloody work of persecution, and do it blasphemously in the name of the Prince of Peace? Would there be any more need for severe coercive laws, and costly prisons, and frowning bastiles, for the restraining of crime and the protection of the virtuous and well-disposed? Would there be any urgent necessity for the profession of arms, the maintenance of large armies and fleets, not to protect us from the incursions of wild beasts, but from what is worse, the selfishness and the hostile attacks of our brother man? Would there be such

constant antagonism between the rulers and the ruled? and would the different classes of society stand frowning upon each other from their separate orbits? Oh no! With the spirit of the Bible universally prevalent, and which is so well adapted to man as a social being, these gigantic miseries—these crushing wrongs—would crumble into clay, and there would be “peace on earth, and goodwill towards men.”

Every movement which tends to improve the social condition of man, to make him freer politically and spiritually, wiser and better, cannot but be in harmony with the benevolent spirit of the Christian system; and whilst the Bible has said nothing about the *Extension of the Franchise*, *Freehold Land Societies*, or other movements connected with political or sanitary reform, it has laid down principles which have anticipated all improvements and agencies which really seek his good, and with which it cannot but harmonise; for whilst these generally seek to promote his temporal welfare, the Bible is in advance of these, inasmuch as it seeks to promote his higher and eternal interests. Since this is the design of the Bible, surely in a world like this, of such complicated evil, it will never frown upon any movement which will secure to man more social happiness—more leisure for the cultivation of his intellect, which will disentangle him from hostile environments—and thus afford him more opportunity for the unembarrassed prosecution of his higher interests. The Bible must certainly be as much in harmony with the onward march of benevolent movement as it is with the onward march of scientific inquiry; and just as more and more extended inquiry into the phenomena of nature has more and more confirmed the statements of the Bible bearing upon these points, in like manner will a more free and extended range of benevolent aspiration and movement for the temporal and spiritual weal of man be found in harmony with the principles which pervade the Bible, and which have emanated from the God of love.

At one time men-of science unfortunately imagined that between their pursuits and the Bible there was a total want

of harmony—that Bible statement and scientific discovery could not be harmonised, and therefore, in many cases, they were led to look upon the Bible with suspicion and contempt. But more extended inquiry, on the one hand, and a truer interpretation on the other, have shown that nature and revelation, science and Scripture, are in perfect harmony, and ever must be so. And surely if there is harmony in this department, which, after all, is not so essential for the weal of man, there cannot but be harmony in the higher region of moral and benevolent effort, which seeks the promotion of man's temporal and spiritual interests. Depend upon it, therefore, that everything that will do good to the working classes of this country, either in the direction of a more extended education—cheap and useful publications, temperance, and sanitary reform, savings banks, or benefit societies, mechanics' institutes and rational amusements; in short, everything which tends to elevate the lower strata of human society to a higher platform, where the long simmering mass of ignorance may be exposed to the genial sunshine of a kindly intelligence, must be in harmony with the benevolent spirit of this book, and with the mission of Him who came as the good Shepherd to seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away; to bind up that which was broken, to strengthen that which was sick, and give his life a ransom for many. I cannot for one moment imagine that the Saviour, who taught the ignorant, who fed the famishing multitude, who provided for the poor, and spoke kindly to the distressed, can look with indifference upon any movement which will place men in the way of well-doing, redeem them from the hand of the spoiler, and bring them under elevating influences both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

The Bible is not, therefore, the dull, dead, unsympathising book which many working men have supposed it to be. It does not stand in haughty isolation from any movement which is calculated to promote your social well-being. It is a book for man, and therefore it comes with strong human sym-

pathies, like the good Samaritan, to lift up the wounded and the bleeding, the down-trodden and the bruised. The social evils that beset us are many ; and a celebrated writer, in his own quaint way, traces all these to the fact that we have forgotten God. What is the remedy for this but the Bible ? Do but try it earnestly, prayerfully, amid all your sorrows, struggles, and sufferings. There is nothing I am more convinced of than this, that you are far in the way of helping yourselves, when you have imbibed the spirit of the Bible, and when you have been led first of all to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, for in so doing you will obtain all other needed blessings.

Before concluding this lecture, permit me to offer a few remarks upon a topic intimately connected with the present subject. I refer to *mental culture*. This is what you owe to yourselves, to your country, to the world, and to God who has gifted you with intellect.

A more extended diffusion of useful knowledge, a higher taste for literary pursuits, among the great masses of the labouring population, would greatly improve their physical condition, and elevate them in the scale of social well-being. Let no one deem that the highest literary taste is incompatible with manual labour, and may not conduce greatly to a more cheerful and comfortable discharge of it, and tend greatly to improve the physical condition of the labourer. There is an intimate connection between a taste for literature and physical comfort ; and I would much sooner expect to find the dwelling of the man, who cultivated such a taste, neat, clean, and comfortable under the warm and cheering influence of intelligence, than the dwelling of his neighbour, where books are the least valued commodity, and where they are seldom or never consulted as tried and honest friends.

Intelligence will make the mechanic more expert and cheerful at his labour. It will quicken his inventive powers, furnish him with shorter and easier processes for completing his work ;—it will enable him to subject the materials of his handicraft to the principles of correct science, and give him

greater facility in the application of the mechanical powers. What but a generally diffused intelligence, a more perfect knowledge of the arts and sciences, and the untiring spirit of industry and commercial enterprise, have changed the physical aspect of so many parts of the country, cleared the ground of the low mud huts of a century ago, promoted cleanliness and ventilation, opened up new sources of manufacture and comfort, and converted trackless moors and mosses into rich and generous soils? As the labouring population rise in the scale of self-culture and self-reliance, they will as invariably rise in the scale of physical and social comfort, moral influence, and spiritual power.

But however great the physical advantages are which a generally-diffused intelligence confers, the healthy moral influence which it exerts upon the masses is still greater. I can scarcely conceive of the working man who has a taste for literary pursuits, whose mind is stored with the rich treasures of a healthy literature, who has won many golden hours from the mis-spent time of his fellow-labourers, who finds a ready, a delightful, and cheap companionship in a few good books, and in the comforts of his own fireside, falling so easily a prey to debasing gratifications, as his fellow-workman who knows only to labour, but has no taste for reading, and therefore yields himself to utter vacancy of soul, and to every passing temptation, when his labour is over. The one is placed under healthy influences both for the body and the mind; he has a continual source of enjoyment both within and without himself—the other has only the limited range of physical and too often debasing enjoyments. These healthy moral influences may pervade the labours of every day. There are many occupations that can be followed without at all interfering with trains of thought that may be passing through the mind of the operative. Hence many workmen, engaged at employments which admitted of this, have carried on long processes of thought—have examined and reviewed what they had previously read—and have, even amid the dizzying revolution of wheels and pinions, and the

ceaseless clank of machinery, wooed the muses, or held fellowship with the hoary spirit of history ; and have thus won, even from the seemingly barren field of labour, many precious hours of delightful enjoyment, rich with the spoils of all times.

A mechanic with a literary taste, has a constant source of delightful companionship, and can prosecute bodily and mental labour at the same time. He can fall back upon the books that he has read ; he can repeat select passages from his favourite poets, and thus provide himself with cheerful fellowship at all times. He can hold converse with the departed great—the poets sing for him—the orators declaim. By his books he can be in all times, and at all places ; and never for a moment relax his labours for an honourable subsistence. His fellow-workman, who has no such taste for reading, who is illiterate and untutored, has no such resource to fall back upon—he has no proper companionship within himself ; for, if his mind is not an utter blank, it is filled with a crowd of trifling and debasing thoughts—gloating over past scenes of sensual enjoyment, or looking forward with impatience for similar pleasures. A man, disciplined like the former—accustomed to think, and to read, and to hold intercourse with a pure and a lofty morality—cannot but have a taste for more rational pleasures than his illiterate companion ; and cannot but occupy a better vantage ground for the sure possession of all the social decencies of life. The small but well-selected collection of books in the dwelling of the artizan, is a pledge of domestic comfort—of happy fireside influences, and a security for their continuance. The ancient Romans were in the habit of cherishing feelings of great veneration towards certain deities which presided over home, the protectors of household virtues. The images of those divinities were kept sacred in the innermost part of the house. A dwelling without such protection, in the eye of an ancient Roman, would be comfortless and unsafe ; but the poorest artizan in the land may now have a far nobler protection for his home—a security for domestic comfort and peace, in a few well-

selected standard works in the different departments of literature and religion. These are your household deities; and, in the light and beaming intelligence which they will shed around you—in the feelings of kindly interest to man and every living thing which they will beget within you—in the elevating views which they will give you of the works of God—in the wide field of contemplation which they will open up for you in this world and in the bright world above—you are protected against the downward tendencies of your nature; your affections are purified, ennobled, and enlarged; and, instead of ignorance and superstition being the shield of household virtues and the protection of home (such as the Penates were to the imagination of the ancient Romans), the holy affections cherished by the companionship of good books, by an elevated literature, and a faith divine—the light of truth pointing you to another and a better world—will be the best protection of every social virtue, and the best security to domestic comfort and peace.

The prejudice, indeed, has often been cherished and expressed by some, that a too easy access to knowledge or libraries is a dangerous thing to those who are obliged to labour twelve or fourteen hours every day;—an unlimited access to books is apt to fill their heads with too high notions, and make them discontented with their condition, their employers, and their employment. I do not know what would be the amount of knowledge which such would deem sufficient for those who have to labour with their hands. Perhaps their ideas of the maximum of education would be the proficiency of the ancient peasant, who imagined that Rome, the largest city in the world at the time, would be no larger than his native village! or of those peasants whom Gray describes in his celebrated elegy,—

“ But knowledge to their eyes did ne’er unroll
Her ample page.”

But if useful knowledge is good for one class, it is good for all; if it is an instrument of moral regeneration to one class,

it must be so to another ; if it can elevate one class, it will elevate all. The danger lies not in the widest possible diffusion of knowledge, but in the partial communication of it to a few. It is not one in a class, or one class merely in a nation, that should have access to knowledge, but every individual in a class, and all classes alike, so far as circumstances will permit. One man may rise by superior adroitness, address, and knowledge which he has perverted, greatly above his fellow-workmen, who have been content to remain in the imaginary bliss of ignorance. If this man turns his superior knowledge to bad account, and engenders feelings of animosity and discontent in the factory or workshop, makes a sport of moral obligation, and recognises no fixed principles, he is certainly a very dangerous man—not so much on account of his more extended reading and his superior learning, which he has perverted, but on account of the ignorance of his fellows, who are made the weak and willing dupes of his false views and his wicked designs. Now, would it be right to entertain a prejudice against the diffusion of knowledge amongst the working classes because one or two had turned their reading and knowledge to bad account, and played upon the ignorance of the rest? This should form the very reason for a wider diffusion of knowledge—for a national system of education—for the establishment of libraries—for the increase of cheap, useful publications ; so that bad men, with perverted views of things, might not be able to make dupes of the rest on account of their ignorance.

And again, who is the man that will be most inclined to deeds of disorder—to a discontented, peevish spirit, ever grumbling over his own lot—the least able to bear the ills of life, or to appreciate its sweets? Who is the man that will most likely be the victim of low desires and debasing appetites? The man whose heart has been softened and his mind expanded by useful reading—whose eye has been opened to see the harmonies of nature around him, and his ear to hear its sweetest sounds ;—the man who, at the close

of his day's labour, can hold intelligent communion with the departed great;—who can accompany the traveller in his wanderings, or soar with the poet in his flights of fancy?—or the man who has no taste for reading, no sympathy for intellectual enjoyment, and whose element is, therefore, in the gratification of the senses, and the lowest pursuits of his nature?

I very warmly commend to your careful perusal one of Knight's monthly volumes, entitled, "Mind amongst the Spindles," consisting of tales and sketches selected from the "Lowell Offering," the first volume of which was published in 1841, and contained original articles written exclusively by females employed at the mills at Lowell, Massachusetts. The volume of selections which has been published by Knight, and which you may purchase for one shilling, consists, for the most part, of short tales taken from real life, and more or less connected with the occupation pursued at the factories, or with the history of their inmates. There are some very shrewd and discriminating sketches of character; some simple, fresh, and touching descriptions of home scenes; with a few pieces of a more philosophical and aspiring character.

All these pieces are characterised by a fine healthy tone of moral feeling; a vein of sweet retiring feminine piety pervades the whole; and no one, who really rejoices in the improvement of the human family, can rise from the perusal of this book without feeling that he has been brought under the influence of holy affections and cultivated minds. A genuine piety, worthy of the descendants of the noble Puritans—a piety reared and nurtured amid the beauties of nature, under the sacred influences of the roof-tree, where family trials have been soothed by the sweet songs of Zion, and domestic affections strengthened by the morning and the evening sacrifice—such a home-bred unobtrusive piety characterises these volumes, whilst self-reliance and self-denial are inculcated throughout as essential to comfort and success in life.

This singular volume is to my mind a most refreshing instance of the compatibility of a much higher mental development and relish for literary pursuits, in connection with manual labour, a token for good, and a fair promise that the industrious classes may rise to a much more elevated sphere of physical and social comfort; and this will only be accomplished as they rise in the scale of intellectual being, as educated and emancipated men, redeemed from the relentless cruelty of low and degrading pursuits, to which so many of them, alas! are addicted.

The factory girls of Lowell labour amid the clatter of power-loom machinery for twelve or fourteen hours every day, but then they have been well educated and trained in youth—they have been blessed with an education similar to that of the middle-classes of this country, and therefore they have been protected from debasing allurements—taught to look upon mind as the noblest inheritance—and to find real enjoyment in intellectual pursuits. This is no exaggerated view—no pleasing dream. The “Lowell Offering” ought to be held up to the operatives and employers of this country as a proof of what education and temperance—in short, what the Bible—will accomplish for the industrious classes, and ought to be pondered by all who wish well for their country and their kind. May the same high appreciation of mind—the same cultivation of intellect, which have rendered the factory girls of Lowell so famous, not also distinguish the same class of operatives at home?

This cannot be, so long as the education of the young is so imperfect, and social economics so ill understood and so little practised. There is much to be done before our factories will bear a comparison with the power-loom establishments of Lowell; but temperance and education, with the Bible, will bring our industrious classes forward with rapid strides; without these, I cannot see how any onward movement will ever be made. Could there not be a greater emancipation of mind from the ceaseless monotony of machinery—from the drudgery of daily toil? Is mind never to rise higher

than the tending of a machine, or the performance of a daily piece of manual labour? Is mind to have no higher region and no other course than those which are described by the constant revolutions of wheels and pinions? Is literature always to be considered incompatible with labour? Let the literary taste, mental qualities, lofty aspirations, and deep religious affections of the factory girls at Lowell, shed a new light over the destiny of all who are similarly engaged at home, and teach us how much mind may be emancipated, elevated, and turned to the best account, even amid the drudgery of daily toil, and secured against low and debasing gratifications. What has been done in the factories at Lowell may also be done in such establishments at home by a similar process. Is it too much to predict that the present century cannot pass without improving the social and intellectual condition of the operatives of this country? If they would be but strong in their own cause, and true to their own best interests, by using every means to increase their moral power and influence, not wasting their time in bitter invective—in soured and exasperated jealousy towards the higher classes—in aimless ginhouse apathy—or, what is worse, in beastly dissipation; and if the wealthy, or even the middle classes, would really meet their poorer brethren half-way, the wide gulf which has most fatally divided the two classes for so many ages would be gradually filled up—two points that have unfortunately hitherto been extremes, would meet—the blessings of education, the decencies and comforts of social life, the honourable gains of commercial enterprise, would be more equally diffused, and dense masses of our sunken population would be lifted from “the fearful pit and from the miry clay.” To achieve such a glorious work as this, there must be self-culture, self-reliance, self-denial, on the part of the poor, and many earnest hearts and helping hands on the part of the rich.

In the meantime, the wide field of British literature is now cheerfully thrown open to all. None are interdicted to enter—not one! And what a vast and varied field is pre-

sented to all whose vernacular tongue is English, wherever they are to be found on the face of the earth! A wide field—where all the gifts of the widest spread language in the world, of national learning, talent, and genius—the literary wealth of the past and the present—the offerings of the departed great in the temple of fame bequeathed to all posterity, and the proud donations of the living—are blended together in endless variety and boundless profusion. Into this wide expanse of garden, and meadow, and field, where history, and poetry, and fiction have woven their fairest wreaths, and scattered abroad profusely their choicest gifts—all are welcome to enter; not one shall be shut out, not one! In the name of the guardian genius of British liberty and British literature, I bid every one welcome; and let the hard and horny hand of labour be stretched out to pluck unsparingly from the tree of knowledge in the midst of the garden.

But whatever you read, do not forget the Bible. Ever cherish a profound reverence for its precious truths, obey its blessed precepts, and it will help you more than any other agency in the onward march of self-improvement; it will correct the evils of the inner and the outer life, and invest you with a moral power which cannot fail in helping you to reach the high and noble destiny which yet awaits you.

LECTURE XIV.

OBJECTIONS.

The Bible the invention of priests. Religion a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Inconsistencies of professing Christians. Indelicate and impure narratives. Some of the Mosaic institutions unworthy of the Supreme Being.

IN the following lecture I shall endeavour, as briefly as I can, to meet a few objections which have been frequently brought against the Bible, or against the Christian faith in general. In many instances the objections to Christianity, especially amongst the working classes, arise from their want of discriminating between what is really Christianity as taught by Jesus, and *Creedism* as enforced by men. But there is a wide difference between the two. Man destroys the very best gifts of Heaven when his pride and selfishness interfere with these. He has turned the very best gifts of God into a curse ; and Christianity, though designed to purify, and bless, and heal, is not an exemption from the destroying influence which the selfishness of man exerts upon the most precious blessings of Heaven. The "staff of life" may be turned into a poison : but, mark you, it is then no longer the staff of life ; and, in like manner, Christianity, by means of selfish influences, may be turned into a curse : but, mark you, it is then no longer Christianity, although, alas ! it may bear its name. And it is deeply to be regretted that thousands, not careful to discriminate between principles and organisations, become impressed with the conviction that this is

Christianity after all, that this is the only aspect in which it can be presented, and, as a matter of course, they become averse to its very name, and associate its influence, ordinances, and ministers, with priestly domination, oppression, and craft. However unreasonable this is, it is not to be wondered at, if men will not go to the New Testament and read, and judge for themselves. Before Christianity is condemned, let every one be careful to separate the genuine from the false; the permanent and the real from the transitory and the corrupting inventions of men.

1. A very common factory and workshop objection to the Bible is this, viz., It is the invention of priests, and religion from beginning to end is a priestly stratagem, designed to work upon men's fears, in order to enslave the human mind and to get the command of the purse. The Bible is a book designed to exalt a certain class at the expense of the many. It has been composed by priests; and religion is altogether a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, and the people who can submit either to the Bible or the priests are a set of miserable dupes. This is the secret feeling of many who have taken but a very superficial view of the matter. For, first of all, man is a religious being to begin with; he has religious susceptibilities; he must be a worshipper of something in spite of himself.

"It is a great mistake to suppose that the systems of religion which have obtained in the world, owe their existence, or any thing very considerable in their substance, to the devices of priests or of kings. It has not been within the power of these functionaries to *create* this religious tendency in man, or to make it really other than it has been. They may have *used* this element, but its existence and characteristics have come from a higher source. The divinities of the heathen, which bring evil on man, are the natural offspring of the moral nature of man. The Loke of the Northmen, the Sheeva of the Hindoo, the Ahriman of the Persian, and the evil powers which, according to the Greek

than the tending of a machine, or the performance of a daily piece of manual labour? Is mind to have no higher region and no other course than those which are described by the constant revolutions of wheels and pinions? Is literature always to be considered incompatible with labour? Let the literary taste, mental qualities, lofty aspirations, and deep religious affections of the factory girls at Lowell, shed a new light over the destiny of all who are similarly engaged at home, and teach us how much mind may be emancipated, elevated, and turned to the best account, even amid the drudgery of daily toil, and secured against low and debasing gratifications. What has been done in the factories at Lowell may also be done in such establishments at home by a similar process. Is it too much to predict that the present century cannot pass without improving the social and intellectual condition of the operatives of this country? If they would be but strong in their own cause, and true to their own best interests, by using every means to increase their moral power and influence, not wasting their time in bitter invective—in soured and exasperated jealousy towards the higher classes—in aimless ginhorse apathy—or, what is worse, in beastly dissipation; and if the wealthy, or even the middle classes, would really meet their poorer brethren half-way, the wide gulf which has most fatally divided the two classes for so many ages would be gradually filled up—two points that have unfortunately hitherto been extremes, would meet—the blessings of education, the decencies and comforts of social life, the honourable gains of commercial enterprise, would be more equally diffused, and dense masses of our sunken population would be lifted from “the fearful pit and from the miry clay.” To achieve such a glorious work as this, there must be self-culture, self-reliance, self-denial, on the part of the poor, and many earnest hearts and helping hands on the part of the rich.

In the meantime, the wide field of British literature is now cheerfully thrown open to all. None are interdicted to enter—not one! And what a vast and varied field is pre-

sented to all whose vernacular tongue is English, wherever they are to be found on the face of the earth! A wide field—where all the gifts of the widest spread language in the world, of national learning, talent, and genius—the literary wealth of the past and the present—the offerings of the departed great in the temple of fame bequeathed to all posterity, and the proud donations of the living—are blended together in endless variety and boundless profusion. Into this wide expanse of garden, and meadow, and field, where history, and poetry, and fiction have woven their fairest wreaths, and scattered abroad profusely their choicest gifts—all are welcome to enter; not one shall be shut out, not one! In the name of the guardian genius of British liberty and British literature, I bid every one welcome; and let the hard and horny hand of labour be stretched out to pluck unsparingly from the tree of knowledge in the midst of the garden.

But whatever you read, do not forget the Bible. Ever cherish a profound reverence for its precious truths, obey its blessed precepts, and it will help you more than any other agency in the onward march of self-improvement; it will correct the evils of the inner and the outer life, and invest you with a moral power which cannot fail in helping you to reach the high and noble destiny which yet awaits you.

LECTURE XIV.

OBJECTIONS.

The Bible the invention of priests. Religion a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Inconsistencies of professing Christians. Indelicate and impure narratives. Some of the Mosaic institutions unworthy of the Supreme Being.

IN the following lecture I shall endeavour, as briefly as I can, to meet a few objections which have been frequently brought against the Bible, or against the Christian faith in general. In many instances the objections to Christianity, especially amongst the working classes, arise from their want of discriminating between what is really Christianity as taught by Jesus, and *Creedism* as enforced by men. But there is a wide difference between the two. Man destroys the very best gifts of Heaven when his pride and selfishness interfere with these. He has turned the very best gifts of God into a curse; and Christianity, though designed to purify, and bless, and heal, is not an exemption from the destroying influence which the selfishness of man exerts upon the most precious blessings of Heaven. The "staff of life" may be turned into a poison: but, mark you, it is then no longer the staff of life; and, in like manner, Christianity, by means of selfish influences, may be turned into a curse: but, mark you, it is then no longer Christianity, although, alas! it may bear its name. And it is deeply to be regretted that thousands, not careful to discriminate between principles and organisations, become impressed with the conviction that this is

Christianity after all, that this is the only aspect in which it can be presented, and, as a matter of course, they become averse to its very name, and associate its influence, ordinances, and ministers, with priestly domination, oppression, and craft. However unreasonable this is, it is not to be wondered at, if men will not go to the New Testament and read, and judge for themselves. Before Christianity is condemned, let every one be careful to separate the genuine from the false; the permanent and the real from the transitory and the corrupting inventions of men.

1. A very common factory and workshop objection to the Bible is this, viz., It is the invention of priests, and religion from beginning to end is a priestly stratagem, designed to work upon men's fears, in order to enslave the human mind and to get the command of the purse. The Bible is a book designed to exalt a certain class at the expense of the many. It has been composed by priests; and religion is altogether a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence, and the people who can submit either to the Bible or the priests are a set of miserable dupes. This is the secret feeling of many who have taken but a very superficial view of the matter. For, first of all, man is a religious being to begin with; he has religious susceptibilities; he must be a worshipper of something in spite of himself.

"It is a great mistake to suppose that the systems of religion which have obtained in the world, owe their existence, or any thing very considerable in their substance, to the devices of priests or of kings. It has not been within the power of these functionaries to *create* this religious tendency in man, or to make it really other than it has been. They may have *used* this element, but its existence and characteristics have come from a higher source. The divinities of the heathen, which bring evil on man, are the natural offspring of the moral nature of man. The Loke of the Northmen, the Sheeva of the Hindoo, the Ahriman of the Persian, and the evil powers which, according to the Greek

and the Roman, dispensed their judgments in this world, but reserved their fury for the next—all these owe their origin to the imperishable operations of human thought and of the human conscience, strengthened, as these thinkings and susceptibilities have been, by seeing so much physical evil pressing everywhere so closely upon the heels of so much moral disorder.”¹

Is the Bible a piece of priestly imposture, designed to promote the interests of an exclusive craft, viz., the priests themselves? Then one may reasonably conclude that they have feathered themselves as well as possible, and turned everything to their own advantage. So one would suppose, if they have been the authors of this book. How then stands the case? It is just exactly the reverse of such a supposition.

In the Bible there is no mention made of priests for nearly two thousand years. There is no appearance of priestcraft in such an omission; for if priests had written this book, they certainly would have taken care not to inform us that the world could do without a priestly order for the long period of nearly twenty centuries. It is often affirmed that Moses was neither more nor less than a crafty priest, who took good care of his own interest. Now, the truth is, Moses was not a priest at all, nor did he place any of his children in this so-called easy, lucrative, and selfish employment.

Had the Bible originated with the priests, would it have contained such cutting reproofs of their conduct? would it have condemned them so unsparingly as it has done, when they lapsed into the general corruption of manners which marked so frequently the history of the Jewish nation? The words of keen satire, of burning indignation, uttered against the degenerate priests of the Jewish people, are of very frequent occurrence in the writings of the prophets. Surely this does not savour of priestcraft.

On turning to the New Testament, there is nothing of

¹ The Age and Christianity, p. 167.

priestcraft in the constitution and history of the early church as recorded there. The apostles would not even take charge of money matters, but called upon the Christian people to choose for themselves a distinct class of office-bearers, for the special purpose of distributing the funds of the church to the poorer brethren. The people had the right assigned to them unreservedly by the apostles, of choosing their own spiritual teachers, or any other office-bearer necessary for the management of a religious community. The tithe-law of Judaism passed away, along with its other institutions, and the spiritual instructors were supported by the free-will offerings of the people.

The apostles have been very careful to show that there was not, and could not be, any exclusive class of priests, after Christ, by the one offering of himself, made atonement for the sins of the world. One whole epistle has been devoted to show that the system of an exclusive priesthood, such as existed under the Mosaic economy, ceased when the great High Priest of our profession exclaimed upon the cross, "It is finished!" There is no class of men who can claim for themselves exclusively either the name or the office of priest. Now, surely had the Bible been a piece of refined priestly imposture, great care would have been taken to establish this point; but in the whole of the New Testament there is not a single passage which favours such an idea. You will find that Christians—*all Christians*, without any reference to one class more than to another, are in a figurative sense called priests, "a royal priesthood," who should offer up the spiritual sacrifices of praise and of prayer to God, and who should live devoted to his service; but there is no countenance whatever given to the idea of an exclusive class of priests. This is altogether foreign to the spirit of the New Testament.

"As to what Christian ministers are called, in Catholic countries, you must be aware that there the Bible is locked up as a prohibited book. In Spain, Portugal, or Italy, if a man be found with the Bible in his hands, not only will it be

snatched away, and thrown into the flames, but he may think himself happy if he be not thrown there too. Now, look this fact steadily in the face. Nay, do not wink; for though it is a bright evidence in my favour, you ought to be able to bear its light. Where priests reign, the Bible burns. Where the Bible reigns, priests must bow. In this country, where the Bible is, or may be, in every one's hands, every one examines the claims of ministers, and gives them as much as he thinks they deserve. When priests prohibit the Bible, they show themselves like 'the children of this world, wise in their generation.' If I wished to destroy the reign of the priesthood in any country, I would send the Bible among them; just as I would put gunpowder into a rock, if I wished to blow it up. Does the Bible, then, look like a patent for priestcraft? Just as much as the sun looks like a funeral pall, or Paine resembles an apostle of Jesus Christ."¹

The priestcraft, of which so many of the working classes justly complain, has not arisen from the Bible, but from the pride and the selfishness of man. The position and claims which the New Testament gives to the minister of the Gospel, are reasonable, and must commend themselves to every candid mind. "The workman is worthy of his hire—they that serve at the altar should live by the altar." When they dispense to others of their spiritual things, they should in return receive of their worldly things. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." Surely there is nothing unreasonable, nothing of priestcraft, nothing that savours of always looking after the "loaves and the fishes" in all this. If a man who has devoted the best years of his life to the acquirement of languages, and who has spent his strength in teaching them to others, is considered worthy of remuneration—on the same principle, surely, the teacher of Christian truth, who has devoted his whole energies to this object—energies which, if devoted to business, might have speedily

¹ Bennett's Lectures on Infidelity.

acquired wealth—is worthy of a competent support, not as a matter of charity, but clearly as a matter of right. This is not priestcraft but justice. But, it may be said, have not the most extravagant claims, both to wealth and power, been set up by men calling themselves ministers of the Gospel of Christ? I do not deny the fact, but let not Christianity bear the blame, because none is due. There are no such claims recognised in the New Testament. The same simple rule which applies to all labour is applied in the New Testament to the minister of the Gospel—"The labourer is worthy of his hire." Surely no one will say that this is priestcraft. But it is no wonder many are repelled from the adoption of what they deem Christianity, because they have acted like the man who would judge of the beauty and purity of a stream, not at the point where it came leaping from the rock, spotless and fresh as the mountain dew, but after it had struggled its weary way through the busy bustling haunts of men, and had passed through every polluting process connected with the social exigencies and the manufacturing enterprise of a large town. Now, the man who would judge of the purity of the mountain stream, *not* at its fountain-head, *not* where its path lay amid the unsullied beauties of nature, but after it had passed through all the polluting processes which the exigencies of a large commercial city demand, would certainly be acting a most unreasonable part; but *not more so* than the man who is content to form his opinion of Christianity, not from what it really is, as seen issuing from the clear fountain-head of truth in the New Testament, but after it has become corrupted and debased by the lies, the selfishness, and the stratagems of men. I must confess at once that, were I to act in this way, I could not do otherwise than form the most unfavourable opinion of Christianity, and to be consistent, could not do otherwise than reject it. Yea, more, if I had no other means of judging of Christianity than from the exhibitions which are given of it in some embodiments which have assumed its name, I would say at once, and say it most heartily too, the sooner the earth is

quit of this faith the better. But blessed be the God of truth! that the sayings of Christ, and the book which contains them, and the history of what Christianity once was, what it really is still, and what it is designed to accomplish for man, are yet extant; and when I gaze upon certain embodiments of so-called Christianity which this book most emphatically condemns, I see at once that I am not to judge of what the Christian faith is, and what it is designed to do, at this point—such forms, such organisations, are just as unlike the spirit of Christ and his religion, as the light which feebly struggles into the gloomy apartment through smoked and broken glass, is like the glorious sunshine of heaven flashing brightly upon the open face of day—and if I would judge rightly of the light of Christianity, or the light of heaven, I must, in either case, approach the source whence that light comes; for the one, I must go to the life and the teaching of Christ as recorded in the New Testament, and select that embodiment of Christianity upon earth which, so far as I can judge, is the nearest approach to his spirit and his life,—for the other, I must not expect it in the gloomy apartment into which light is only admitted through cracked and discoloured glass; but I must go out into the open sunshine of heaven, for “the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the light.”

2. Akin to such an objection as the above, is that which is made to the Bible, on account of the inconsistent lives of individual professors: I referred to this in the first lecture, and my only reason for referring to it again is, because it is a stereotyped objection in almost every factory and workshop where infidel sentiments are retailed. I admit at once that there are such lives, alas! too many; but are we to refuse the light of the sun, and shut ourselves out from it, because there are spots upon his disc which, doubtless, in some degree tarnish his lustre and enfeeble his rays, but through which he nevertheless shines to enlighten and cheer? and is Christianity to be condemned in whole, because its very light and

warmth have attracted around it the dark spots of individual or collective inconsistency, but through which it nevertheless struggles onward, the light and the blessing of the world? A dense cloud of smoke will doubtless obscure an Italian sky of perfect azure; but above that smoke, there is still the profound and the blue serene—in like manner individual inconsistencies on the part of professing Christians, certainly obscure the bright firmament of truth; but beyond all these, there is still the bright and enduring truth of God; and it would just be as unreasonable to affirm that the sky produced the smoke, or was in any way accountable for the dense cloud that rolled up from beneath, as it would be to assert that Christianity has made any one unkind, dishonourable, licentious, or untrue, or was in any way accountable for the inconsistencies of those who profess to bear its name, but who are destitute of its spirit and its power. But, nevertheless, just as the smoke will obscure the brightest sky, so will these inconsistencies obscure the light of God's truth; but surely it is unreasonable to judge of Christianity only from these, without falling back upon those great truths which hold up these to eternal scorn.

3. Some of the actions recorded in the Bible have been cavilled at as indelicate and as altogether out of place in a book, more especially assuming to be Divine. Now this objection is to me at least a very strong confirmation of the truth and Divine authority of this book. The Bible never inculcates anything like hero worship upon us, and therefore it never presents us with heroes who are matchless for their virtues, or altogether spotless in their lives. There is only one exception—Jesus himself. The Bible records most impartially, not only the good, but the bad, deeds of the numerous personages it brings before us. In this respect, it is assuredly the most impartial book that was ever written. It neither magnifies the good, neither does it conceal the bad, in any of its great and leading characters. Man, left to himself, would not have detailed the faults of his fellow with

so much plainness, so much abrupt simplicity, as the Bible has done. In short, it is a book which man can never outgrow. It fathoms the lowest depths of human depravity. It is impossible to go deeper than the Bible has done in this direction. And why? Because it was designed to be *a faithful mirror of what the human heart is*, and therefore no book has searched the hidden chambers of its iniquity with such a bright torch as the Bible. It is therefore impossible to go deeper than the Bible in this respect. It has measured both the extremes of humanity—the heavenly good to which we may aspire, and to which we may attain, and the devilishly bad to which we may sink. But it is impossible to sink lower than those horrible depths of iniquity which it has described, or to rise higher than those Divine heights of goodness to which it most affectionately beckons. We may say of this book in the words which it has ascribed to God—“it is high as heaven, what can we know? it is deep as hell, what can we do? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.”

It was designed to show what man is in the very worst phases of his nature,—the malignant, murderous disposition of Cain, the horrible impieties of the antediluvian race when the earth was filled with violence, and the imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil, and that continually—it depicts the heroic faith as well as the sinful weakness of Abraham, the sanctimonious villany of Jacob, the shameless lust of David, at once treacherous, cruel, and blood-thirsty—the military, yet ruffian-like career of Joab, and flashes the unwelcome light of heaven upon some of the darkest, most revolting deeds which history records, and reveals the bad as well as the good in its great historical characters with a plainness and a bluntness of speech altogether unlike the manner of men when left to chronicle the doings of their fellows. And why so? Because the Bible was designed to be *a picture to the very life of what man is in his most depraved and abandoned moments*. If the Bible has bluntly described man as he is in these, *don't be ashamed of it because*

it has spoken the truth, but be ashamed of that fallen humanity which, in its worst aspects, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It is very evident, therefore, that the Bible, to serve its purpose at all, could not be over-delicate, fastidious, and nice. Such was not the nature of many of the subjects about which it had to treat at times, and therefore it spoke as truth demanded and the exigencies of man required, with a bluntness and a plainness peculiar to itself, because speaking in God's name, and for the eternal good of men. If many narratives in the Bible seem indelicate, let the circumstances of the times in which many portions of it were written be taken into account, and let it ever be remembered that these narratives are but drawings to the life of what *man really is* in his worst moments. At the same time, let this also be borne in mind, that whilst the Bible has fathomed the lowest depths of evil to which man can sink, and whilst it has done so in order to be a safeguard and a warning to every soul, it has also, on the other hand, revealed the high destiny of spiritual loveliness and moral purity and power to which the soul of man may attain. And here again, as in the former case of awful depravity, it is impossible for man to outgrow the Bible. *It therefore measures the two moral extremes of humanity, the awfully bad on the one hand, and the benignly good and the beautifully true on the other.*

The objection of impurity is so frequently urged by a certain class, that I am unwilling to dismiss it without quoting the valuable remarks of an eminent living author upon this very point. "Who are the persons—what their character, by whom this charge of impurity has been brought? Have they themselves been the exemplarily pure, and virtuous, and godly?—evidently and deeply concerned for the interests of religion and of moral principle?—shrinking, with a delicate sensitiveness, from all that is opposite to virtue and to piety—trembling to touch the unclean thing themselves, and solicitous to preserve others from the taint? Has the reason why they do not come to the Bible, why they refuse to study

or even to read or have anything to do with it, been really a conscientious apprehension of having their principles contaminated, their refined moral sensibilities impaired, the warmth of their devotion cooled? The answers to such questions I leave to the conscience of every one of my hearers who has ever heard the imputation of lascivious and immoral tendency thrown upon that book which we believe to be the book of God. Further, in objecting, whether gravely or jeeringly, to particular portions of the book, have these persons shown any disposition to make the allowance which every well informed and candid mind ought to make, and will make, for the diversity of customs and manners, of modes of speech and peculiarities of association, and other similar circumstances, in different countries, and periods, and states of society?—or without regarding these, let me rather ask, in what state of mind, and on what occasions, are such objections usually offered. Is it in the spirit of seriousness or of lightness? of sober earnest or of jest? of piety or of profaneness? of temperance or of social excitement? of ribaldry or of purity? And let it be further considered, of what a different complexion and tendency are the passages commonly referred to, from the sly inuendos, the studied refinements, the luscious and enticing pollutions of voluptuous writing, where the excitement of the passions is felt to be the writer's end in all that he discloses, and where the very drapery of concealment is so adjusted, as only the more effectually to stimulate the imagination! Is not the conscience of every one who opens the Bible sensible at once of a purpose and a tendency at antipodes to this? of an intention and aim, in all the passages in question, the very reverse of everything of the kind by which these others are characterised? Instead of alluring to sin by cherishing any light feeling of its sinfulness, or any favourable impression towards it, is not the invariable design to set forth in lively colours and in lines of deep condemnation, its fearful malignity, turpitude, and guilt, the Divine detestation of it, and the peril of every one who indulges in it? Is there, in any one instance, the slightest

perceptible symptom of its being the aim of the writer to excite evil passions or impure conceptions and desires? Is there not, on the contrary, on all occasions, an infinite distance from everything of the kind, and an obvious, affectionate, and pervading solicitude to attach shame and reprobation to all that is sinful, and to promote in every heart the sentiments and feelings of spiritual purity and heavenly mindedness? I ask further:—if it were otherwise—if the Bible were really a book of impure conceptions and immoral tendency—in whose hands should we naturally expect to find it? Should it not be in the hands of those who love to have their passions stimulated, their impure desires inflamed, their propensities to evil encouraged? Might we not, as a matter of course, look for it on the table of the man of pleasure,—fingered and worn down at favourite passages as such books ever are, by the sensual, the frivolous, and the profane? If it really countenanced sin, would it not be a favourite with the sinner? If it were a friend rather than a foe to licentiousness, would it not be liked by the licentious? If it supplied kindling and fuel to lust, might we not expect it to be the secret companion, the *vade-mecum*, and bosom-friend of the man ‘whose mind and conscience are defiled,’ whose ‘eyes are full of adultery, and insatiate of sin’? Should we even be greatly surprised to find it in the parlours and chambers of the brothel? Is it then so? Is the Bible the favourite book with such characters or in such places? I need not answer the question. Who ever took up the Bible for such excitement, for such encouragement? Who ever thought of coming to that hallowed fire to kindle their impure desires? Is not the Bible the book from which such characters shrink?—which they cannot bear to look into, or so much as to hear named?—which they are sensible opposes, and thwarts, and condemns them—and which they are well pleased to keep out of sight and out of mind? Such men may say what they will, but in reviling the Bible they bear witness against themselves—they give evidence how they dislike its very purity, spirituality, and strictness, and how

fain they are to discover, or to devise, anything capable of being construed into a plausible apology for disregarding it. —Once more; I make my appeal to facts. Many are the profligates who, by means of the Bible, have been reclaimed from the ‘paths of folly, sin, and shame:’—Heard you ever of any who, by the Bible, were led into those paths? It has often been known to change enmity against God into love:—was it ever known to change love into enmity? It has humbled many a proud spirit: did it ever make a humble spirit proud? It has softened many a hard heart: did it ever harden a soft one? It has turned the stone to flesh: did it ever turn the flesh to stone? It has sweetened many a bitter spring and purified many a polluted one: did it ever embitter the sweet or pollute the pure? Many have died in desperate anguish, lamenting the ill-fated hour when first they listened to a sceptical companion, or opened an infidel book and closed and laid aside the Bible: heard you ever of any, whose last hours were embittered by the reflection, of their having listened to the instructions, followed the counsels, and obeyed the precepts of the Bible? No—Never. That book, the faith of which has changed and purified the heart, has made it the residence of holy principles, and holy affections, and holy joys, and has thus fitted it for the present and everlasting enjoyment of the God of purity and love—that book has ever proved the rock of the soul’s confidence in the dying hour; so that, when in any case there has been *fear*, it has arisen, not from any apprehension of the insufficiency of what it reveals, but from the self-diffident suspicion of the dying saint, that he had not truly believed it and experienced sufficiently its renovating power!

“Nothing can be easier than bandying Bible phrases in the impure sportiveness of libertine *badinage*,—but it is only because light associations with that book are felt to take off from the awfulness of its damnatory denunciations. It is easy to take portions of it out of their connection, and so to turn them to purposes the very opposite of those they were meant to serve. But what should we think of the man—

what of the character of his heart—what of the fairness of his insinuated inference—who should take up Solomon's graphic description of the adulterous harlot, whom he saw from his casement addressing her enticements to the simple unguarded youth—and should gloat over it, in the prurience of his polluted imagination; while he paid no regard to the solemn and thrilling close—a close which reads to all, and reads to youth especially, the monitory moral of the whole: —'He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks: till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare and knoweth not that it is for his life. Hearken unto me now, therefore, O ye youth, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.'"¹

4. It has been objected that the tiresome minutiae connected with the Mosaic dispensation were unworthy of the Divine Being. They who put such an objection as this would do well to consider the character and the circumstances of the people who were first brought under the influence of Mosaic rite and rule. They had been for a long time a nation of slaves, and, of course, when emancipated from their grievous bondage, and for a long time after that, retained the low habits and the degrading views which slavery always begets. Physically, socially, and spiritually, they were in Egypt in the lowest possible condition. It is therefore unreasonable to suppose that they could be lifted all at once from the lowest strata, so to speak, of existence, to the highest region of spiritual life. This might indeed have been accomplished by the operation of miraculous power, but this was not to be; and, looking back from our stand-point in history, we now see that the Divine Being

¹ Wardlaw.

designed to accomplish this by a progressive system, by a religion which, on the whole, was admirably adapted in its sanitary and civil regulations, and in its purely religious precepts, to the circumstances of the times and the character of the people. Those were the times of darkness over all the earth, and the people upon whom this religious experiment was to be made were, to say the least, a wholly uneducated and at the time a semi-barbarous race. The Mosaic ritual was therefore well adapted to this infant state of progress. I cannot conceive of anything better for this period of imperfection, preparation, and exclusion—this period which was more designed to conserve than to diffuse the rudimental elements of God's truth. Was that a perfect state or a perfect religion? Far—very far—from it! It was but a yoke of bondage; but, nevertheless, whilst it was only a shadow of good things to come, it was *far—very far—in advance of any religion which existed in any part of the earth at the time*. Imperfect as the Mosaic economy was, where will you find, in the age in which it was established, or in any age that succeeded it, till the advent of Christ, any religion that at all approached it in point of correct views of the Supreme Being, or in point of furnishing a definite standard for the conduct of every-day life? The Mosaic institutions were but the earlier strata designed as the basis of a subsequent formation, more in harmony with the perfections of God and the spiritual nature of man. It was but the early development, the primal rudiments, so to speak, of an ultimate and more perfect system that was yet to come. All the details, therefore, and all the phenomena connected with the Mosaic ritual, were quite in accordance with this idea. It was a system *suited to the time and the people*, but still preparatory, imperfect, and rude; but nevertheless it was just as much the work of God as those rudimental formations were, when in the depths of past ages “the earth was without form and void”—a rude and shapeless mass, not indeed as yet fitted for the habitation of man, but admirably adapted to the creatures which then peopled it, and gradually

advancing through the ages of chaos to an ultimate and more perfect arrangement, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." There is progression in all God's works, and why not in the embodiment of means and agencies designed to affect the spiritual life of man? The Mosaic dispensation was imperfect, when compared with the *Christian* system, before which it gave way, and it was designedly so, because contemplating the advent of a "better time;" but this comparative imperfection does not disprove its Divine origin any more than the preparatory formations in the earth, many ages prior to the present arrangement, do not disprove that these were all advancing towards a new order of things, and a higher state in the development of life, intelligence, and beauty. The one era of imperfection was completed, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and the other era of religious imperfection was brought to a close when the Divine Man of Sorrows uttered these last words upon the cross,—
"It is finished."

LECTURE XV.

OBJECTIONS—*Continued.*

Contradictions—accounted for by frequent transcription. Omission of facts which, if stated, would harmonise conflicting accounts. Eastern customs. Different modes of computing time—Instances of these. Various readings. Concluding reflections.

5. ANOTHER fruitful source of objection is to be found in what has been termed the contradictions of the Bible. If these do exist, they at least prove that there was no collusion on the part of its writers to stereotype a forgery in one unvarying form of expression and uniform exhibition of details. I admit at once that there may be *seeming* contradictions in the Bible, just as to us there are oftentimes seeming contradictions in nature and in providence; but what of that? is there not, on the whole, a wondrous harmony in nature, and a beautiful moral harmony in the Bible as well as in the history of the world, which is but another name for the providence of God? It is but a proud and an empty philosophy, it is but a poor and barren faith, that will stumble and grow pale at minor discrepancies to be found in the Bible, and many of these more apparent than real, because, arising perhaps from careless transcription of a name, a number, or a date, or from references to customs in a remote age and country, that run counter to our experience, or from the mere omission of some minor details, which, if supplied, the apparent contradiction would vanish at once. Is this to be wondered at, when the Bible has come to us from a more distant age, when it has passed through more hands, and been more frequently transcribed, than any book

in the world besides? And is the Divine authority of the Bible to be impugned because there may be discrepancies on such points as these, whilst the great body of doctrine and precept, so profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, remains altogether untouched, and the moral harmony of the Bible altogether unimpaired? But many of these so-called contradictions are more apparent than real. Many of them have vanished before the sweep of a profound criticism, and the onward march of science, whilst others that are still said to exist, will doubtless, in the course of time, share the same fate; and of all of them it may be said, that they do not impinge by one hairsbreadth on the Divine validity of those sublime doctrines, those pure precepts, that form the immutably good, and beautiful, and true, in the word of God.

The discrepancies that have been so frequently paraded with an air of triumph, are oftentimes to be found in other authors who have written histories of the same events, or biographical accounts of the same persons, and these discrepancies can be easily explained on the ground that the writers, whilst relating what is substantially correct, have looked at the events which they describe, and the persons whose memoirs they have written, from different points of view, and each has woven into his history the events which, to his mind, seemed the most prominent; it is very evident, therefore, that four accounts may be in many respects essentially different from one another, whilst they are at the same time, on the whole, absolutely correct. The apparent discrepancy in this case, as it is doubtless in the case of the evangelists, resolves itself simply into *omission* of some details which have been left out by one or more, or by the whole, but which, if supplied, would fully harmonise the statements of all. "This possible reconciliation is admitted readily enough in the case of many seeming discrepancies of other historians; but it is a benefit which men are slow to extend to the sacred narratives. There the objector is always apt to take it for granted that the discrepancy is real; though

it may be easy to suppose a case (and a possible case is quite sufficient for the purpose) which would neutralise the objection. Nothing is more common than to find, in the narration of two perfectly honest historians—referring to the same events from different points of view, or for a different purpose—the omission of a fact which gives a seeming contrariety to their statements; a contrariety which the mention of the omitted fact by a third writer instantly clears up.” In proof of this, take the following examples mentioned by Tholuck. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, calls Gallio *proconsul* of Achaia: one would not have expected this, since, though Achaia was originally a senatorial province, Tiberius had changed it into an imperial one, and the title of its governor, therefore, was *procurator*. The testimony of one historian, as to the political relation of Achaia to Rome, on account of omitting the circumstance which I am about to mention,—viz., that the Emperor Claudius had restored the province to the senate—would be very apt to throw suspicion upon the statement of Luke; but all this has been removed by the historian Suetonius, who supplies the very omission which rendered Luke’s statement doubtful, for that historian informs us that Claudius had restored the province to the senate, and thus, of course, quite unintentionally confirms the statement in the Acts of the Apostles. The same evangelist calls Sergius Paulus governor of the island of Cyprus, yet we might have expected to find only a prætor, since Cyprus was an imperial province. In this case again the correctness of the historian has been remarkably attested; coins, and, later still, a passage in Dion Cassius, have been found, giving proof that Augustus restored the province to the senate; and as if to vindicate the evangelist, the Roman historian adds—“Thus proconsuls began to be sent into that island also.” What an outcry would have been made had not the specious appearance of error been thus obviated; and is it not fair to suppose that apparent discrepancies of the same order may be eventually removed by similar evidence? Take one or two examples of a similar kind, to

which Dr Chalmers has referred in his admirable work on the Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation.

“In the gospels we are told that Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, married his brother Philip’s wife. In Josephus, we have the same story; only he gives a different name to Philip, and calls him Herod; and, what adds to the difficulty, there was a Philip of that family, whom we know not to have been the first husband of Herodias. This is at first sight a little alarming. But, in the progress of our inquiries, we are given to understand from the same Josephus, that there were three Herods in the same family, and therefore no improbability in there being two Philips. We also know, from the histories of that period, that it was quite common for the same individual to have two names; and this is never more necessary, than when employed to distinguish brothers who have one name the same. The Herod who is called Philip, is just as likely a distinction as the Simon who is called Peter, or the Saul who is called Paul.—The name of the high-priest, at the time of our Saviour’s crucifixion, was Caiaphas, according to the evangelists. According to Josephus, the name of the high-priest at that period was Joseph. This would have been precisely a difficulty of the same kind, had not Josephus happened to mention, that this Joseph was also called Caiaphas. Would it have been dealing fairly with the evangelists, we ask, to have made their credibility depend upon the accidental omission of another historian?”

That there are a few, not only apparent, but real discrepancies in the Bible, is a matter which may at once be conceded to the objector without the slightest hesitation or alarm. “In our judgment,” says an eminent writer, “Christians have unwisely damaged their cause, and given a needless advantage to the infidel, by denying that any discrepancies exist, or by endeavouring to prove that they do not. The discrepancies to which we refer are just those which, in the course of the transmission of ancient books, Divine or human, through many ages,—their constant transcription by different hands,—their translation into various languages,—may not

LECTURE XV.

OBJECTIONS—*Continued.*

Contradictions—accounted for by frequent transcription. Omission of facts which, if stated, would harmonise conflicting accounts. Eastern customs. Different modes of computing time—Instances of these. Various readings. Concluding reflections.

5. ANOTHER fruitful source of objection is to be found in what has been termed the contradictions of the Bible. If these do exist, they at least prove that there was no collusion on the part of its writers to stereotype a forgery in one unvarying form of expression and uniform exhibition of details. I admit at once that there may be *seeming* contradictions in the Bible, just as to us there are oftentimes seeming contradictions in nature and in providence; but what of that? is there not, on the whole, a wondrous harmony in nature, and a beautiful moral harmony in the Bible as well as in the history of the world, which is but another name for the providence of God? It is but a proud and an empty philosophy, it is but a poor and barren faith, that will stumble and grow pale at minor discrepancies to be found in the Bible, and many of these more apparent than real, because, arising perhaps from careless transcription of a name, a number, or a date, or from references to customs in a remote age and country, that run counter to our experience, or from the mere omission of some minor details, which, if supplied, the apparent contradiction would vanish at once. Is this to be wondered at, when the Bible has come to us from a more distant age, when it has passed through more hands, and been more frequently transcribed, than any book

in the world besides? And is the Divine authority of the Bible to be impugned because there may be discrepancies on such points as these, whilst the great body of doctrine and precept, so profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, remains altogether untouched, and the moral harmony of the Bible altogether unimpaired? But many of these so-called contradictions are more apparent than real. Many of them have vanished before the sweep of a profound criticism, and the onward march of science, whilst others that are still said to exist, will doubtless, in the course of time, share the same fate; and of all of them it may be said, that they do not impinge by one hairsbreadth on the Divine validity of those sublime doctrines, those pure precepts, that form the immutably good, and beautiful, and true, in the word of God.

The discrepancies that have been so frequently paraded with an air of triumph, are oftentimes to be found in other authors who have written histories of the same events, or biographical accounts of the same persons, and these discrepancies can be easily explained on the ground that the writers, whilst relating what is substantially correct, have looked at the events which they describe, and the persons whose memoirs they have written, from different points of view, and each has woven into his history the events which, to his mind, seemed the most prominent; it is very evident, therefore, that four accounts may be in many respects essentially different from one another, whilst they are at the same time, on the whole, absolutely correct. The apparent discrepancy in this case, as it is doubtless in the case of the evangelists, resolves itself simply into *omission* of some details which have been left out by one or more, or by the whole, but which, if supplied, would fully harmonise the statements of all. "This possible reconciliation is admitted readily enough in the case of many seeming discrepancies of other historians; but it is a benefit which men are slow to extend to the sacred narratives. There the objector is always apt to take it for granted that the discrepancy is real; though

it may be easy to suppose a case (and a possible case is quite sufficient for the purpose) which would neutralise the objection. Nothing is more common than to find, in the narration of two perfectly honest historians—referring to the same events from different points of view, or for a different purpose—the omission of a fact which gives a seeming contrariety to their statements; a contrariety which the mention of the omitted fact by a third writer instantly clears up.” In proof of this, take the following examples mentioned by Tholuck. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, calls Gallio *proconsul* of Achaia: one would not have expected this, since, though Achaia was originally a senatorial province, Tiberius had changed it into an imperial one, and the title of its governor, therefore, was *procurator*. The testimony of one historian, as to the political relation of Achaia to Rome, on account of omitting the circumstance which I am about to mention,—viz., that the Emperor Claudius had restored the province to the senate—would be very apt to throw suspicion upon the statement of Luke; but all this has been removed by the historian Suetonius, who supplies the very omission which rendered Luke’s statement doubtful, for that historian informs us that Claudius had restored the province to the senate, and thus, of course, quite unintentionally confirms the statement in the Acts of the Apostles. The same evangelist calls Sergius Paulus governor of the island of Cyprus, yet we might have expected to find only a prætor, since Cyprus was an imperial province. In this case again the correctness of the historian has been remarkably attested; coins, and, later still, a passage in Dion Cassius, have been found, giving proof that Augustus restored the province to the senate; and as if to vindicate the evangelist, the Roman historian adds—“Thus proconsuls began to be sent into that island also.” What an outcry would have been made had not the specious appearance of error been thus obviated; and is it not fair to suppose that apparent discrepancies of the same order may be eventually removed by similar evidence? Take one or two examples of a similar kind, to

which Dr Chalmers has referred in his admirable work on the Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation.

“In the gospels we are told that Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, married his brother Philip’s wife. In Josephus, we have the same story; only he gives a different name to Philip, and calls him Herod; and, what adds to the difficulty, there was a Philip of that family, whom we know not to have been the first husband of Herodias. This is at first sight a little alarming. But, in the progress of our inquiries, we are given to understand from the same Josephus, that there were three Herods in the same family, and therefore no improbability in there being two Philips. We also know, from the histories of that period, that it was quite common for the same individual to have two names; and this is never more necessary, than when employed to distinguish brothers who have one name the same. The Herod who is called Philip, is just as likely a distinction as the Simon who is called Peter, or the Saul who is called Paul.—The name of the high-priest, at the time of our Saviour’s crucifixion, was Caiaphas, according to the evangelists. According to Josephus, the name of the high-priest at that period was Joseph. This would have been precisely a difficulty of the same kind, had not Josephus happened to mention, that this Joseph was also called Caiaphas. Would it have been dealing fairly with the evangelists, we ask, to have made their credibility depend upon the accidental omission of another historian?”

That there are a few, not only apparent, but real discrepancies in the Bible, is a matter which may at once be conceded to the objector without the slightest hesitation or alarm. “In our judgment,” says an eminent writer, “Christians have unwisely damaged their cause, and given a needless advantage to the infidel, by denying that any discrepancies exist, or by endeavouring to prove that they do not. The discrepancies to which we refer are just those which, in the course of the transmission of ancient books, Divine or human, through many ages,—their constant transcription by different hands,—their translation into various languages,—may not

only be expected to occur, but which *must* occur, unless there be a perpetual series of most minute and ludicrous miracles—certainly never promised, and as certainly never performed—to counteract all the effects of negligence and inadvertence, to guide the pen of every transcriber to infallible accuracy, and to prevent his ever deviating into any casual error! Such miraculous intervention, we need not say, has never been pleaded for by any apologist of Christianity; has certainly never been promised; and, if it had—since we see, *as a matter of fact*, that the promise has never been fulfilled—the whole of Christianity would fall to the ground. But then, from a large induction, we know that the limits within which discrepancies and errors from *such* causes will occur, must be very moderate; we know, from numberless examples of *other* writings, what the maximum is,—and that it leaves their substantial authenticity untouched and unimpeached.

“The corruptions in the Scriptures, from these causes, are likely to be even less than in the case of any other writings; from their very structure,—the varied and reiterated forms in which all the great truths are expressed; from the greater veneration they inspired; the greater care with which they would be transcribed; the greater number of copies which would be diffused through the world,—and which, though that very circumstance would multiply the number of variations, would also afford, in their collation, the means of reciprocal correction;—a correction which we have seen applied in our day, with admirable success, to so many ancient writers, under a system of canons which have now raised this species of criticism to the rank of an inductive science. This criticism, applied to the Scriptures, has, in many instances, restored the true reading, and dissolved the objections which might have been founded on the uncorrected variations; and, as time rolls on, may lead, by yet fresh discoveries and more comprehensive recensions, to a further clarifying of the stream of Divine truth, till ‘the river of the water of life’ shall flow nearly in its original limpid purity. Within such limits as these, the most consistent advocate of Christianity

not only *must* admit—not only may *safely* admit—the existence of discrepancies, but may do so even with advantage to his cause. He *must* admit them, since such variations must be the result of the manner in which the records have been transmitted, unless we suppose a supernatural intervention, neither promised by God nor pleaded for by man; he may safely admit them, because—from a general induction from the history of all literature—we see that, where copies of writings have been sufficiently multiplied, and sufficient motives for care have existed in the transcription, the limits of error are very narrow, and leave the substantial identity untouched: and he may admit them with advantage—for the admission is a reply to many objections founded on the assumption that he must contend that there are *no* variations, when he need only contend that there are none that can be material.”¹

A most satisfactory solution has been given of the conflicting statements of Mark and John as to the time when Jesus was crucified. Mark says, “and it was the *third* hour, and they crucified him.”² But John says, “And it was the preparation of the passover, and *about* the *sixth* hour.”³ Here, then, is a difference of three hours, and it has been often paraded with an air of defiance as if there was no possibility of reconciling these different statements, and as if the evangelists were altogether unworthy of credit. I call your attention to what follows as a most satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

“While the Romans, like the Jews, had a *natural* day, from sunrise to sunset, which they divided into twelve hours, these hours being, of course, of different lengths at different seasons of the year; they had also a *civil* day, which, like ours, was reckoned from midnight to midnight, but, instead of being divided into *twenty-four*, was divided into *sixteen* equal parts, or hours. Each of these hours, of which the reader will find an account in Adam’s ‘Roman Antiquities,’ had its appropriate name as well as number. Each of them

¹ Roger’s Essay on Reason and Faith: their Claims and Conflicts.

² Mark xv. 25.

³ John xix. 14.

would, of course, be equal to *an hour and a half* of our time, so that beginning from midnight—

The 1st hour of the civil day would terminate at <i>half-past One o'clock</i> A.M.				
The 2d	...	...	at	<i>Three</i>
The 3d	...	...	at <i>half-past</i>	<i>Four</i>
The 4th	...	...	at	<i>Six</i>
The 5th	...	...	at <i>half-past</i>	<i>Seven</i>
The 6th	...	...	at	<i>Nine</i>

That is, the *sixth* hour of the Roman *civil* day would end at the same moment as the *third* hour of the Jewish or Roman *natural* day, which at the time of the year when Christ was crucified (the vernal equinox), was precisely at *our* nine o'clock A.M.

“John says that it was ‘*about* the sixth hour’ when Pilate delivered him up; which may signify any point of time during the course of that hour. Suppose a third of it had run, it would then be eight o'clock A.M.—leaving an hour for necessary preparations, and for the procession to Calvary, and thus harmonising the statement of John with that of Mark as completely as can be desired. Using different modes of notation, the two evangelists point to precisely the same hour as that of the crucifixion, the *third* hour of the *natural* day, and nine o'clock of our day.

“But why, in this case, do they use different modes of notation? ‘John,’ it will be said, ‘in other instances, speaks of the hours of the natural day in the same way as Mark; and why, then, does he adopt a different method in this?’ There was a better reason for this than that which Bishop Watson has given, namely, that John wrote his gospel in Asia. For if John wrote in Asia, and Mark, as is believed, at Rome, we would naturally expect the facts to have been reversed—that John would employ the Jewish, and Mark the Roman, notation of the hours of the day. But we have said that both Jews and Romans had the same mode of dividing the natural day; and the question is, Why did John speak of the *civil* day in this case, while he speaks of the *natural* day in other cases? One reason may be, that he was recording the judicial proceedings of a Roman governor, for

which the civil day would always be used; but the true reason probably is, that John himself was undoubtedly present in Pilate's judgment-hall at the time, and that in noting the hour when his Lord and Master was delivered over into the hands of his enemies, and his death determined on, he would naturally be guided by the water-glass, or other time-piece, which was there for the purpose of regulating the proceedings; for Pilate's judgment-hall must have had a horologe of some kind. Mark, on the other hand, recording what took place in the open air, would as naturally be guided by the *sun-dial*, or the sun himself, and would tell us at what hour of the natural day the crucifixion took place. It matters not whether Mark was present at the crucifixion, or received his information otherwise: for in either case it was natural for him to follow this plan."¹

Nothing can be more complete or satisfactory than the above solution of what appears, at first sight, a glaring contradiction.

Doubtless, many of the apparent discrepancies of Scripture, which seem to place one evangelist in collision with another, or in opposition to the statements of nearly contemporary historians, would, upon a more extensive knowledge of ancient history, by which omissions might be supplied, admit of a perfect reconciliation. Professor Gaussen of Geneva has given a very good illustration of what I mean.

"The complement of the circumstances of two facts which happened in the East, eighteen hundred years ago, remains unknown, because the sacred historians relate them to us with singular brevity. Some persons, nevertheless, should the narrative not explain to us in what manner some of their traits may be reconciled, are in haste to declare them contradictory. Nothing is more irrational. Suppose (to give an instance not from the Scriptures) that a Hindu pundit happened to read three succinct histories, all three veridical, of the illustrious Napoleon. The first will tell him that the

¹ Rev. P. Davidson.

capture of Paris, preceded by much bloodshed at the gates of that capital, compelled him to abdicate; and that an English frigate was commissioned to transport him to an island in the Mediterranean. A second will relate that this great captain, vanquished by the English, who made themselves masters of Paris without opposition, was transported by them to St Helena, whither General Bertrand desired to follow him, and where he breathed his last in the arms of that faithful servant. A third will relate that the fallen emperor was accompanied in his exile by Generals Gourgaud, Bertrand, and Montholon. All these narratives would be true; and yet, how many palpable contradictions in these few words! The learned man of Benares might say, St Helena in the Mediterranean! Who knows not that it rises like a rock in the great ocean? So much for a first contradiction: one of these books must be false; we must reject it. But again: Paris taken without a blow being struck! and Paris taken after a bloody battle at the gates! There is a second. Once more: here we find one general, there three generals! showing a third contradiction.

“Now, compare these supposed precipitate judgments with many of the objections that have been started against the narratives of our gospels!”

No one supposes that the writings of any great author of the olden time are fundamentally vitiated, because a few discrepancies and minor errors may have crept into the original through the lapse of ages, and the inadvertence of transcribers, long before the age of printing; and no one imagines that even these discrepancies have any effect in quenching the fire of genius which burns, and the immortal spirit of beauty which lives and moves, in their writings.

Wherever there is inspiration, either in the sense in which that term may be applied to a poet like Milton, or a prophet like Isaiah; wherever there is the soul of genius embodied in words; wherever there are “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” who with a soul to appreciate these would ever think of minor errors or discrepancies,—at least in such

a way as to become blind to the soul of beauty, to the form of loveliness, to the flash of immortal genius, to the lofty conceptions which link him to the throne of the Eternal? Would he not rather be in communion with them, and from such heights as these look down upon all such discrepancies, and regard them as we may suppose the angels regarded the dust which gathered upon the robe of the divine Saviour, as he passed on his errands of mercy through the rural walks or the crowded thoroughfares of Judea, and tabernacled amongst men? His glory was seen, notwithstanding the earthly robe he wore, and the earthly dust which covered it; and the real glory of Scripture is still untarnished, although in its work of love, coming down through many generations, the dust of earth, and the failings of time, may here and there cling to its vestments of eternal truth. Some painting of the immortal Raphael, or the no less distinguished Michael Angelo, may in the hands of a careless possessor, all unconscious of its value, be soiled with dust; but the lineaments of immortal genius, the colouring, the finish of no ordinary hand, are there. The dust of ages may have lain upon it—the frame may be mean and shattered—but the glory of genius is there—it will not hide—it stands forth revealed to the eye and the soul that can appreciate it. And so is it with the Bible. The dust of time may lie upon it here and there in the form of discrepancy; but after all, if I may so speak, it is but dust upon the forehead of Divinity, the inevitable necessity of contact with earth—like the sand of the wilderness that clung to the seamless garment of Christ, when he was a pilgrim amongst men—or like the bright full-orbed moon of harvest, skirted here and there by the shadows of a passing cloud in its path of light, love, and beauty, through the blue serene. Thus let us look at the truth of God in the Bible—darkness may rest upon it here and there like the passing clouds upon the bright face of the moon, but nevertheless that truth is the only sure light we have amid the darkness of the present, and if we have but faith and patience, all these clouds will pass away.

6. Another objection to the Bible, which wore a much more formidable aspect at one time than it does now, was found in the various readings of the different manuscript copies of the Scriptures. Every one at all acquainted with this subject, must know that the Jews, to whom were committed the Old Testament, watched over the sacred oracles contained therein with the most scrupulous care. In short, their anxiety upon this point could not be surpassed. They were extremely anxious that their sacred writings should be preserved from age to age unadulterated and pure. After the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and when the Jews were scattered through many lands, the more learned and pious amongst them doubtless became more anxious to preserve the sacred writings entire; inasmuch as these, on account of the scattered condition of the people, were more exposed to corrupting influence than before. A class of learned doctors gradually sprung up, who have been generally known by the name "Massorethes," whose whole profession consisted in transcribing the Old Testament writings. Printing was then entirely unknown, and of course every new copy of the Scriptures could only be made by writing. The labours of those learned men were therefore prodigious. You will be able to form some idea of their labours, and also of their reverence for the mere letter of the Bible, from the fact that they would never suffer themselves to retouch their manuscript, and if any mistake had escaped from them—if, for example, they had written a wrong letter, or written a word twice, or blotted the papyrus, or the parchment upon which they were writing, the whole parchment, though the copy was nearly completed, was thrown aside, and regarded as altogether unfit for use, for they were not permitted to correct any blunders, or to preserve any skin or parchment upon which any erasure had been made. Many of their labours may now be regarded as a species of laborious literary trifling; but doubtless those very labours were overruled for the purpose of preserving the old Hebrew Scriptures unadulterated and pure. For example, any

one of those learned men could have told how often every letter of the Hebrew alphabet occurred in the Old Testament. They have marked down the first letter as occurring forty-two thousand three hundred and seventy-seven times, and the second letter thirty-eight thousand two hundred and eighteen times, and so on with the rest. In each of the books they counted the number of verses, of words, and of letters. "They would have scrupled at changing the position of a single letter, evidently displaced—they would only have called your attention to it on the margin—and would have supposed some mystery involved in it. They would have told you the middle letter in the Pentateuch, and that which is in the middle of each of the particular books of which it is composed." Under such strict and even painful supervision as this, it was scarcely possible that any interpolation could be allowed to creep in, or any very hurtful corruption of the text take place. In proof of this, I may allude to the famous Indian manuscript recently deposited in the Cambridge library. It is now nearly half a century since the pious and learned Claudius Buchanan, while visiting in the Indian peninsula the black Jews of Malabar (who are supposed to be the remains of the first dispersion under Nebuchadnezzar) had in their possession an immense scroll, composed of thirty-seven skins, tinged with red, forty-eight feet long, twenty-two inches wide, and which, in its originally entire state, must have been ninety feet long. The Holy Scriptures had been traced on it by different hands. There remained one hundred and seventeen columns of beautiful writing, and there was wanting only Leviticus and part of Deuteronomy. Buchanan succeeded in having this ancient and precious monument, which served for the worship of the synagogue, consigned to his care. He brought it over to this country, and presented it to the library of Cambridge University. It has been considered impossible that this roll could be taken from any manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures in possession of European Jews. It has been submitted to the most careful examination; it has been

compared word by word, and letter by letter, with the best edition of the Hebrew Scriptures. And what has been the result? The result has been this, that there do not exist between the text of India and that of the West above forty small differences, not one of which is of sufficient importance to lead to even a slight change in the meaning and interpretation of our ancient text, and those differences consist in the addition or the retrenchment of two Hebrew letters, the presence or the absence of which in that language cannot alter the import of the word.¹

The famous Hebrew scholar, Kennicott, spent the best ten years of his life in consulting five hundred and eighty-one Hebrew manuscripts; and the testimony of an equally learned objector on the other side is, that the different readings of the Hebrew manuscripts collected by Kennicott are so few, so unimportant, that they hardly offer sufficient interest to compensate for the trouble they cost. Many precious lives have been devoted to such work as this, the examination of various manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures; and after years of laborious research, and after many lives have been spent at this task, the various readings produced from the ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures after all really amount to little or nothing, so that, in one sense, time, talent, learning, and precious lives, have all been thrown away; and yet, in another sense, those labours have been of immense advantage to the interests of truth, inasmuch as they have shown, that whatever other objection may be urged against the Bible, that of different readings cannot be sustained.

But there is still another citadel to defend. Hitherto I have only spoken of the Old Testament; how stands it with the New? If the charge of different readings can be sustained at all, as invalidating the Divine authority of the Scriptures, the New Testament, from the very nature of the case, must lie open to this charge more than the Old. Copies

¹ Gaussen's "Theopneustia."

of the New Testament would be much sooner multiplied in various languages and places, than of the Old in the early history of the Jewish nation.

The rapid spread of Christianity demanded a rapid multiplication of copies. But then there was no steam-press to throw them off by thousands, and the writing of one single copy of the New Testament was attended with much labour. It would be folly to suppose that the transcriber was in all cases guided to infallible accuracy, and was placed in any case under the operation of miraculous power. This was not required. At the same time it must be admitted, that whilst errors would doubtless in some instances creep into the sacred book from ignorance, and haste, and inaccuracy in transcribing—these errors could not but be speedily detected, and they never could in any case amount to a serious mistake without being exposed, inasmuch as there were so many other copies with which they might have been compared. That slight inaccuracies in transcribing did find their way into the sacred text there can be no doubt, and there can be as little doubt that the various ancient manuscripts of the New Testament contain different readings. This has been a subject of much declamation and triumph to the enemies of the Christian faith. Under the supposed corruptions of the Greek text, they advanced at the commencement of the last century to the attack, and the alarming cry which they wrung in the ears of all Christendom was, There are thirty thousand different readings! and the light of nature was exalted above that uncertain instruction which constantly varies as it passes through the hands of fallible men. What was to be done? The charge was repeated. All the different changes were rung upon it, till humble Christians in every land were made to hear and tremble. It seemed as if the Bible and Christianity were to be altogether demolished by the implacable assaults of an enemy said to be thirty thousand strong. This charge had one good effect. It gave an unwonted impulse to sacred learning—to the study of the languages in which the Bible was originally written, and to the searching, labo-

rious examination of all the ancient manuscripts that could be found in any part of the world. It was thought by the objectors that they had now wrung the death-knell of the Christian faith; but this dark and threatening winter was succeeded by a cheerful and a promising spring. All the ancient manuscripts that could be found in any of the celebrated libraries of the world—manuscripts of all countries and all ages, from the third to the sixteenth century, were brought forth, and thrown down to the examination of friends and foes. The most profound scholars on either side have examined them a thousand times over; nights and days of wearisome watchings have been spent over them; and never did astronomer turn his glass with more intense anxiety to the starry firmament, in the hope perchance of discovering some new planet, than did those critics turn the microscopic glass of keen critical inquiry to discover some new passage, or some isolated interpolation, as the recompense of weary watching and herculean toil. Every manuscript and every text were subjected to the microscope of the keenest inquiry. Like the ardent astronomer, not content with one hemisphere, but who goes in search of new discoveries to the antipodes, where he may gaze upon new skies, and turn his telescope upon new worlds, those sacred critics, not content with the libraries of the West, went into the far East in search of manuscripts, and visited every library containing sacred writings, and subjected them to the most scrupulous examination. Every manuscript that could be found was examined and compared with others; and what has been the result of this rigid examination, this prodigious labour?—for doubtless more lives and more labour have been expended upon this subject, than have ever been expended upon any literary question, or upon all the literary inquiries that have ever engaged the attention of man,—what then, has been the result of all this? what is the testimony of the north, the south, the east, the west, as to the purity and the entireness of the New Testament writings? This army, said to be thirty thousand strong, which was marshalled on the field to destroy

at once and for ever the claims of the Christian faith, turned out, after all, an army of *phantoms*, and the whole of them taken together have not been able to invalidate a single doctrinal point; their whole artillery have not been able to effect one single breach in the citadel of truth. It stands stable, fair, majestic as ever, unscathed by an army of *shadows*, not one of which was seen even to hover upon the field after the contest was over. All the various readings that have been found are just what might have been expected in a book that has been so frequently transcribed as the New Testament. The great wonder is that there are not more. And those various readings amount, after all, to nothing more than this, "the insertion or the omission of an article or a conjunction; the position of an adjective before or after its substantive, or the greater or less exactness of grammatical construction."

Such changes as these do not surely, in almost any instance, affect the doctrines that are most surely believed amongst us. They resemble the changes that are often seen amongst flowers of the same species. In every respect they are not precisely the same—the leaf, the colour, the fragrance, in almost every one, may differ somewhat from another; but no one can fail to identify each flower with the species to which it belongs, or to perceive the spirit of beauty which breathes through, or the marks of Divine power enstamped upon, the whole. No human countenance is in every respect precisely like another, but any difference that may exist never expels any man from the pale of our common humanity. A slight change of countenance never makes any man less human on that account; and surely a slight change arising from the presence, or the absence, or the position of certain words, the presence or the absence of which never affects the essential ideas of any phrase, should never render any copy of the New Testament less divine—should never drive it from the pale of inspired records—when the mere *letter* only has been affected, but the *spirit* of truth, and beauty, and power throughout all, is still the same. One of the ablest critics

that ever devoted time, talent, and prodigious labour to the subject of the various readings, and who consulted no fewer than three hundred and thirty-five manuscripts for the Gospels alone, and who has been charged with an excessive eagerness for the admission of new readings into the ancient text, has been able, after all his research, to find nothing, and to admit nothing, that would in almost any case alter the meaning of any passage in our English version of the New Testament.

When this question respecting the integrity of the original text was agitated for the first time, more than a hundred and twenty years ago—when it was said that an army, thirty thousand strong, were coming down to lay the fair pillar of truth in ruins, there was an excellent and learned man who trembled like Eli for the ark of God; but he girded on his armour for the contest,—he began a series of profound investigations, the result of which was, immoveable conviction in the integrity of the sacred writings; and I can well imagine the sincere joy of the good old Bengel, when, after long researches, and after the removal of all his doubts and fears, now happy, and re-assured himself, he wrote to one of his disciples in the following simple and beautiful strain:—"Eat simply the bread of the Scriptures as it presents itself to thee; and do not distress thyself at finding here and there a small particle of sand which the millstone may have left in it. Thou mayest then dismiss all those doubts which at one time so horribly tormented myself. If the holy Scriptures, which have been so often copied, and which have passed so often through the faulty hands of ever fallible men, were absolutely without variations, the miracle would be so great, that faith in them would be no longer faith. I am astonished, on the contrary, that the result of all those transcriptions has not been a much greater number of different readings." Professor Gaussen, to whom I am much indebted for some of the facts contained in this lecture, has stated that the comedies of Terrence alone have presented thirty thousand different readings, and yet these comedies are only six in

number, and they have been copied a thousand times less than the New Testament.

This large army of objectors, which were marshalled on the field of spiritual conflict more than a century ago, have entirely disappeared. The smoke and the dust which they raised, and which threatened for a time to cover the Scriptures with confusion, have vanished like the mists of the mountain; and the sun of truth, in no way shorn of his beams, but brighter than ever, has arisen in his strength. If the testimony of the most profoundly learned men on both sides of the question will have any weight with you—and surely it ought—you may rest assured that there is positively nothing in the various readings which are to be found in the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament to excite for one moment your alarm—to shake your faith—to weaken your confidence in the revelation which cometh from above.

The purest mountain breeze, the breath of heaven, becomes less ethereal and more tainted with earth in its progress over the dwellings of men, in rural hamlet, in busy town, and crowded city—it becomes more of the “earth, earthy,” just as it comes into contact with the teeming haunts of men. The very light of heaven, the sunshine of the early summer, which laughs into beauty the rippling stream, and seems to play with all the fondness of a child on the whitewashed gable-end of the moorland cottage, becomes less beautiful, less pure and godlike, when it passes through the dingy lanes and the dark alleys where “men do congregate.” But the air and the light of heaven are no less the gifts of God, though contact with man have rendered them impure; and the Bible is no less the gift of God, and not less essential to our very being, although, from its companionship with men and earth for a period of three thousand years, it has been soiled in some few places with the stains which must ever attach to anything, however pure, which passes through the hands of fallible men. But what of that? The casket may be somewhat bruised and defaced, but the precious gem which it contains is altogether untouched. And so is it with the

Bible: the stains of earth—the flaws inseparable from the lapse of many ages—may rest upon it here and there; but notwithstanding these, the eternal spirit of light, love, liberty, and beauty, may be easily discerned and happily felt.

There are several other objections to which I was anxious to turn your attention, but for the present I must conclude, and I do so in the hope that I will be able, on some other occasion, to devote an entire course of lectures to the special consideration of popular objections. You are aware that an evening has been set apart each week, during the delivery of the present course, for the purpose of allowing any person to state his objections to the Bible, or to anything advanced in these lectures. Several persons have availed themselves of this opportunity for mutual conference, and the result has been most satisfactory to all parties.

In bringing these lectures to a close, permit me, before parting with you on this occasion, to express the peculiar satisfaction I have felt in meeting with you from Sabbath to Sabbath in this place during the last four months. These meetings have not only been a source of pleasure to myself, but a real benefit; and my reward is in the fact that not a few of you can say the same.

In the meantime, I must say that I shall ever cherish a grateful recollection of the hours we have spent together in this place; and there is one thing upon which I look back with no small degree of satisfaction, and it is this—that although the topics which have been discussed have oftentimes been very exciting, there has been no intentional harshness of feeling or expression on my part, whilst your attention and decorum have been everything that could be wished.

The deep interest which has been manifested in the course of lectures now brought to a close, and the large meetings which have been weekly convened in this place for the last four months, is to me a most convincing proof that the working classes, as a body, are not doggedly soured and sullen at Bible truth, however much they may be opposed to certain

ecclesiastical embodiments and organisations which have not acted the part of the good Samaritan; and which, on account of this long-continued neglect that is at last giving way to a generous sympathy, have forced the working classes to cherish a false impression of the expansive, sympathising, and generous spirit of Christianity itself. However indifferent, in your estimation, the churches may have been to the claims of the poor, the ignorant, the neglected at home, however blameworthy many of them may still be in this respect, surely the Christianity of the New Testament is blameless. I beseech you, therefore, to discriminate between the two, and not to confound the pride, the passiveness, or the inconsistencies of any section of professing Christians, with the sublime teaching, the pure precepts, the holy aims, the glorious mission, of the Saviour.

In conclusion, permit me to suggest a few thoughts which, if carried into practice, may help you—

“To lift the latch and force the way,”

and open to your view the vast treasures contained in this Divine temple of truth.

1. Go to the Bible, with the conviction that a Divine revelation was urgently required; and that human reason, the light of nature, or call it what you will, when taken as the guide of man, the rule of life, the star of eternity, is nothing better than a delusive meteor flickering amid the gloom, and if followed in preference to the teachings of this book will lead you to the dark mountains, where your feet will stumble and your souls will be lost. In proof of this I present you with a few extracts from a letter, not just the last one, but nearly so, which poor John Sterling sent, a short time before his death, to his friend Thomas Carlyle: “For the first time for many months it seems possible to send you a few words; merely, however, for remembrance and farewell. On higher matters there is nothing to say. I tread

the common road into the great darkness, without any thought of fear, and with very much hope. Certainty, indeed, I have none. With regard to you and me I cannot begin to write; having nothing for it but to keep shut the lid of those secrets with all the iron weights in my power.—Heaven bless you! if I can lend a hand when *there*, that will not be wanting. It is all very strange, but not one hundredth part so bad as it seems to the standers by.”—The light of nature failed this gifted spirit in the valley of the shadow of death, and “as it grew dark,”—he was glad to turn to the Bible which he had used amongst the cottages of the poor, but which, amid the doubts of sceptical philosophy, he had for a season thrown aside.

2. Go to the Bible with the conviction, that if it does not contain a Divine revelation, no book in the world does, and that of all sacred books, the Bible is at least the likeliest to be the word of your heavenly Father.

“If these Scriptures, impregnable in their strength, sustained in their pretensions by innumerable miracles and prophecies, and by the experience of the inner man in all ages, as well as by a concatenation of arguments, all bearing upon one point, and extending with miraculous consistency through a series of fifteen hundred years; if all this combined proof does not establish their validity, nothing can be proved under the sun; but the world and man must be abandoned, with all its consequences, to one universal scepticism.”¹

“What surprises me,” says Saurin, “what frightens me, is to see a diminutive creature, a contemptible man, a little ray of light glimmering through a few feeble organs, controvert a point with the Supreme Being; oppose that Intelligence, who sitteth at the helm of the world; question what He affirms, dispute what He determines, appeal from His decision, and even after God has given evidence, reject all doctrines which are beyond his capacity! Enter into nothingness,

¹ Coleridge.

thou mortal creature ! What madness animates thee ? How darest thou pretend, thou who art but a point, thou whose essence is but an atom, to measure thyself with the Supreme Being, with Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain ?”

3. Go to the Bible in an earnest, humble, impartial, and prayerful spirit. Carefully weigh the evidence in behalf of its Divine origin. Make yourselves intimately acquainted with its blessed truths—daily practise its pure precepts ; and this will be to you the shortest, the easiest, and the most satisfactory proof that this book contains a Divine religion which is profitable for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

“ Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries ;
Happiest they of human race,
To whom their God has given grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch and force the way ;
And better had they ne’er been born,
Than read to doubt, or read to scorn.”

4. Go to the Bible in the full conviction that it is *the book of the revelation of God*—the book needed by all, adapted to all, but emphatically the poor man’s book :—Heaven’s charter of covenanted blessings to man, designed by the Father of mercy, who gave it, to help you in all your struggles, to cheer you amid all your sorrows, to promote your best interests for time, and to guide you to the wealthy place of blessing, where the Lord God shall be the everlasting light of his people, and the days of their mourning shall be ended

5. Go to the Bible, and rest not till you have found therein the companionship of the Divine Man of Sorrows, who preached the Gospel to the poor, who brought deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, and who set at liberty them that are bruised Study his life and

character, drink deeply into his loving spirit, realise his companionship, and you will find that, amid all the social wrongs of the day, and the discordant voices of party politics, that there is nothing after all that would so effectually help you, and bless the whole world, as the universal adoption of his own simple, brief, but divinely inspired precept, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." The practice of this simple principle is all that we need for the healing of all our social wrongs; and "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is an injunction which, if complied with, will restore us to the enjoyment of spiritual harmony and peace. How divinely simple is all this; and how divinely blessed would be the results that would follow from a universal compliance with these two simple commands! The world will never be made really and permanently better, till man, delivered from the selfishness of his nature, shall love his neighbour and his God.

A better time is coming—there are many elements of progress—many hopeful signs in our own day. For these we are indebted to the Bible: and if these are to increase, there must be a greater infusion of Bible principles amongst men. The triumph of truth over error is coming, and the advance of Bible truth will lay all forms of error in the dust. Redress for all social grievances is coming, and the spread of Bible truth will hasten this happy consummation, when—

"Little children shall not toil,
Under or above the soil;
But shall play in healthful fields
Till limbs and mind grow stronger."—

Oh man of toil! I do assure thee that the Bible is, of all books, thy truest friend, thy best helper, thy surest guide; and whatever thou mayest think of churches, chapels, priests, or parsons, the Bible—yes, the Bible!—contains Heaven's balm for all thy wounds—Heaven's relief for all thy burdens—Heaven's remedy for all thy troubles—and thy Father's richest supply for all thy wants. The Bible, therefore, is the last

book thou should'st despise. On the contrary, it is the first book thou should'st clasp to thy bosom, and say, "This is for me." Take courage, brother, a better time is coming to the toiling multitudes of this and other lands—the dawn is already breaking—the shadows, however slowly, begin to flee away; and when the sun of Bible truth shall gild with its bright beams the horizon of social life, men shall be enlightened, happy, peaceful, and free.

"Men of thought! be up and stirring
 Night and day :
 Sow the seed—withdraw the curtain,
 CLEAR THE WAY!
 Men of action, aid and cheer them,
 As ye may !
 There's a fount about to stream,
 There's a light about to beam,
 There's a warmth about to glow,
 There's a flower about to blow ;
 There's a midnight blackness changing
 Into gray.
 Men of thought, and men of action,
 CLEAR THE WAY !

Once the welcome light has broken,
 Who shall say
 What the unimagined glories
 Of the day ?
 What the evil that shall perish
 In its ray ?
 Aid the dawning, tongue and pen ;
 Aid it, hopes of honest men ;
 Aid it, paper—aid it, type—
 Aid it, for the hour is ripe ;
 And our earnest must not slacken
 Into play.
 Men of thought, and men of action,
 CLEAR THE WAY !

APPENDIX.



SUNDAY ADDRESSES FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

"We are happy to find that some fresh attempt is now making in order to bring the principles of Christianity home to the understandings and affections of the working people. It is well known that many of our working population entertain a dislike to churches and to chapels, and systematically abstain from attending the services therein conducted. We do not for a moment mean to say that our religious institutions are all they might be and ought to be, in respect of the operative classes; on the contrary, we firmly believe that a much greater degree of adaptation is practicable. But, at the same time, we feel quite certain that a large amount of the prejudices existing against public places of worship is rather the result of ignorance as to their religious management, than from any positive and enlightened conscientious disapproval. But we are content to take the case as it stands. Whether reasonably or unreasonably, the working classes, as a fact, do absent themselves from our Christian sanctuaries, to a very considerable extent. Their scruples and objections deserve and demand to be treated with respect, and if we cannot second them, we certainly will not overlook nor despise them. Holding these views, and impressed with these feelings, we rejoice to find that the Town Mission is giving attention to the subject, and that the Rev. A. Wallace stands engaged to deliver a series of familiar addresses in the Lecture Room of the Mechanics' Institute, on Sunday afternoons. Mr Wallace takes 'The Bible' as his theme; and as we doubt not his ability to render the subject interesting to his audience, we trust the attendance will encourage the lecturer, and materially subserve the benevolent and disinterested ends of the Town Mission."—*Ed. Bradford Observer*, Jan. 9, 1851.

"Our readers are generally aware that for some months past the theatre of the Mechanics' Institute has been crowded on Sunday afternoons, principally by persons who are *not* in the habit of attending our ordinary places of worship, to hear a series of addresses from the Rev. Alexander Wallace, on 'The Bible as a Revelation from God.' In this arduous undertaking Mr Wallace certainly deserves the high esteem and approbation of all who are anxious to see the masses of the community brought under evangelical influences. That he has succeeded in sustaining the interest of large audiences, drawn together by himself under the circumstances indicated, is of itself a great fact, and one which redounds to his special honour as a public individual. The concluding lecture of

the series was delivered by Mr Wallace on Sunday afternoon last, the building being crowded in every part. The sight was truly refreshing, even as we hope and believe that the good accomplished will be permanent and reproductive.”—*Ed. Bradford Observer*, 15th May 1851.

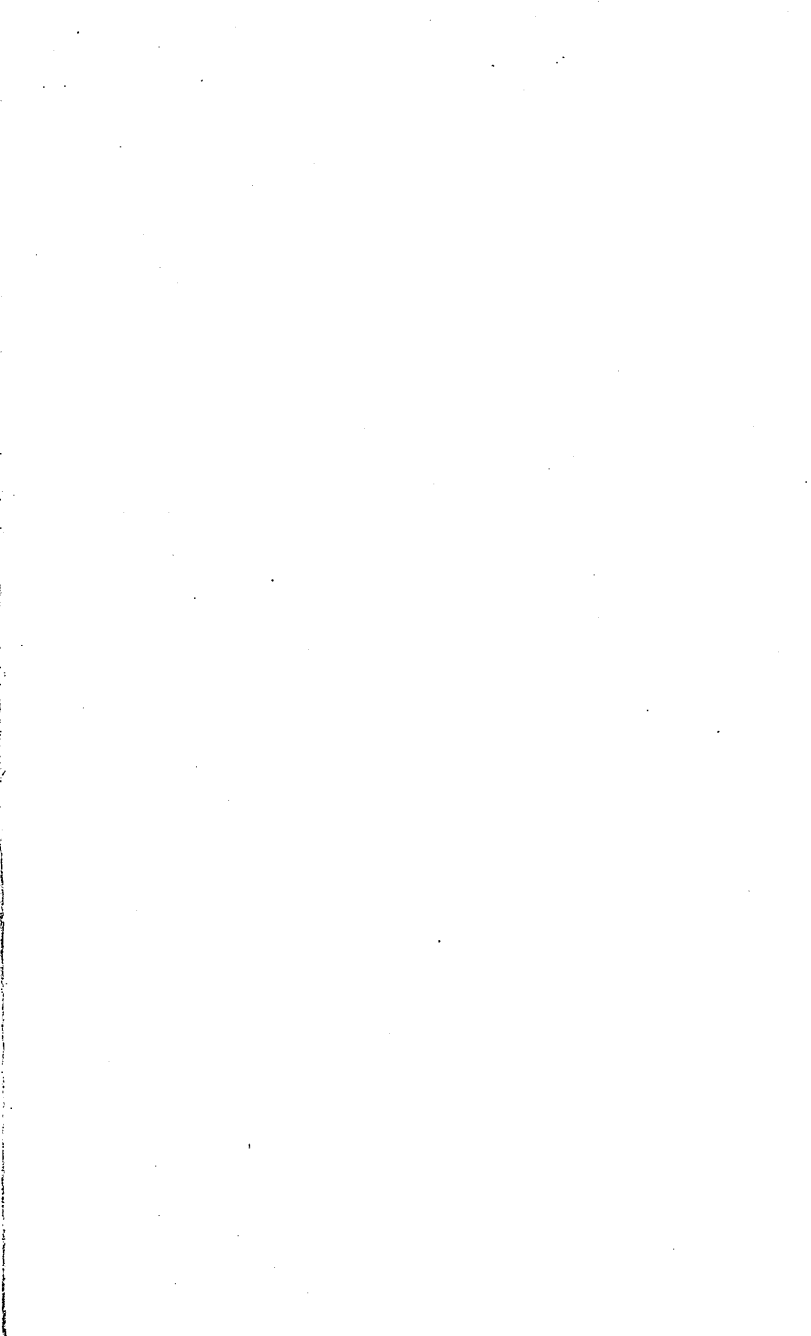
“In the month of January last, the Rev. A. Wallace commenced to deliver a series of addresses on the Bible, under the auspices of the Mission, on Sunday afternoons, in the Lecture Room of the Mechanics’ Institute. These addresses were tried as an experiment to bring out those who do not attend a place of worship, or who entertain doubts respecting the truth of the Scriptures. The most sanguine anticipations have been more than realised. ‘A number of sceptics and others,’ says one agent, ‘who habitually neglect Divine worship, have been induced to attend the Lecture on a Sabbath at the Mechanics’ Institute. Those that I have met with in visiting have expressed great satisfaction with the lecturer, and manifested a subdued and better feeling towards the Bible.’ ‘In making,’ says a second agent, ‘a few miscellaneous visits to-day, I was pleased with the hearty and unqualified manner in which all with whom I have conversed have spoken of the Lectures on Sabbath afternoon. Many of both sexes in my district have attended; some from amongst the men of a sceptical turn of mind, and others who have but seldom gone to any place of worship. One man who has been present at all the Lectures, has been prevailed upon to attend the house of prayer twice every Sabbath. There is every reason to believe that this effort to extend sound information amongst the people, will be productive of great good.’ ‘Met an intelligent working man,’ says a third agent, ‘who told me that he had been to the Mechanics’ Institute, and was much pleased. ‘I believe,’ said he, ‘that these Lectures will do good, not only in removing the doubts of honest inquirers, but in confirming the faith of those who believe. I can speak from experience: there are portions of the Bible which I passed by as dry and uninteresting—others appeared somewhat forbidding; but since listening to these addresses I have learned to look upon them as *links* in the great chain of divine revelation, and now read them with interest.’ A sceptic remarked to another man, that from what he had heard this afternoon, he was convinced that if he must reject the Bible, there was no other book that he could depend upon.

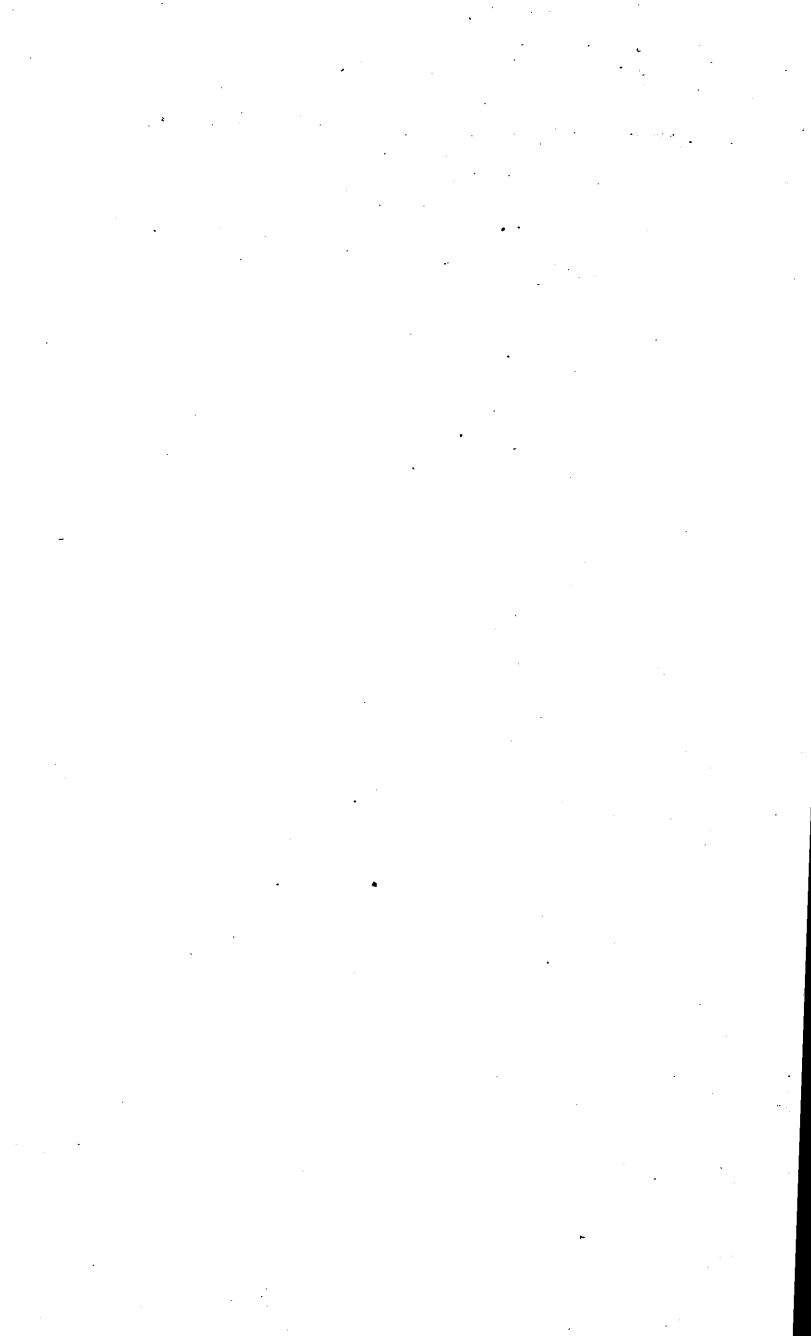
“The place of meeting has been crowded upon every occasion by most attentive and orderly audiences. A number of ‘free-thinkers,’ as they term themselves, have been present from Keighley, Shipley, Lowmoor, and other towns and villages in the surrounding neighbourhood.”—*Annual Report of the Bradford Town Mission*, 1851.

“In last report the committee referred to a series of lectures on the Bible, delivered by the Rev. Alexander Wallace, to the working classes, on Sunday afternoons, in the Lecture Room of the Mechanics’ Institute. The sixteenth and concluding lecture was delivered on the second Sabbath of May last. The interest was sustained till the close. The place of meeting, which seats about eight hundred, was generally crowded in every part; not unfrequently many were unable to obtain admission. But it is still more

encouraging to believe that not a few were arrested, by means of those lectures, in their career of folly, and are now living in hope of a glorious immortality. 'There is a man in my district,' says one agent, 'who was, when first I met him, of a sceptical turn of mind. He began to attend Mr Wallace's lectures on the Bible, and they were of great benefit to him. He subsequently attended the open air services in front of the Manor Hall, and is now a constant visitor at the afternoon service in the Mechanics' Institute. He has commenced to go to a place of worship, and daily defends Christianity in replying to the attacks of his infidel fellow-workmen.' 'I had an interesting conversation,' says a second agent, 'with a wool-comber. He and his shopmates had been in the habit of neglecting the means of grace, but commenced to attend Mr Wallace's lectures. There they were led to reflect seriously on their evil ways, and from that time to the present they have regularly frequented the house of the Lord. Now they experience a peace of mind to which they were formerly strangers.' 'In the course of conversation,' says a third agent, 'with a religious man who had been present at Mr Wallace's lectures, he stated that he knew a young man, a companion of his own, who had been dragged into the vortex of infidelity by his fellow-workmen—all infidels but one. He commenced to attend the Mechanics' Institute; his scepticism soon vanished; he is now happy in his mind, and is a regular attendant at God's house.' 'Called on a man,' says a fourth agent, 'who has been induced to join a Christian church, and now seems happy in the enjoyment of that which he was once accustomed to treat with ridicule and contempt. He left his native village for Bradford when he was nineteen years of age. Shortly after coming here he became acquainted with a number of men of infidel principles, who soon made him as sceptical as themselves. Upwards of twelve months ago, he was led to attend Mr Wallace's lectures at the Institute. While listening from time to time to these addresses, he became convinced that he had a soul to be saved, and the sooner he sought its salvation the better. Under this conviction he was prevailed upon to attend the means of grace, and continues to do so regularly. In the course of conversation to-day, he referred to the pleasure he experienced in having found peace with God. There is reason to believe that this is not the only instance of usefulness from this kind of Christian effort; for, whilst some have been directly benefitted, others have had their sceptical notions considerably shaken, and their principles deprived of much of their apparent point and power.'—*Report of the Bradford Town Mission for 1852.*

THE END.





UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



50 707 518

588162